Overseas Violence and the Seven Years' War: Alleged Atrocities Committed by Non-Europeans as a Subject for Public Discussion in British News Commentary, 1754-1764

SHOVLIN, IAN,DAVID


Durham
University

ABSTRACT

Overseas Violence and the Seven Years' War: Alleged Atrocities Committed by Non-Europeans, as a Subject for Public Discussion in British News Commentary, 1754-1764

Ian David Shovlin

This study re-examines British press coverage of violent overseas episodes that took place in North America and India during the Seven Years' War, 1754-1764. Focussing on news commentary relating to alleged atrocities committed by non-European forces, this research explores the complex public dialogue that emerged in the immediate aftermath of those circumstances. Acts of perceived savagery instigated by native populations against Britons living or stationed overseas, became a prominent and lucrative source of material for the mid-eighteenth century news industry. Press attention afforded to events such as the British defeat at Monongahela in 1755, the Black Hole of Calcutta in 1756, or the massacre at Patna in 1763, satisfied a growing appetite for macabre tales of suffering inflicted upon Britons on the world stage. They also served, however, as discursive platforms for commentators to promote their own, often critical, views concerning issues associated with territorial expansion overseas. Whereas existing studies have mainly approached this area from a post-Seven Years' War perspective, by focussing on the dynamic and distinctive news polemic produced during the conflict itself, this research shows the period 1754-1764 to be more than just a precursor for a later culture of public engagement.

Overseas Violence and the Seven Years' War:

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By

Ian David Shovlin

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Department of History

Durham University

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Despite undertaking my thesis on a part-time basis, I certainly did not intend for a study of the Seven Years' War to take almost as long as the conflict itself. So not to take up any more time of those who have had to listen to me prattle on about scalping and massacres for all these years, I will keep this brief. I wish to thank my supervisors David Craig and Adrian Green for their ongoing assistance and advice, as well as for accommodating my professional commitments outside of academia. Finally, my utmost thanks to Victoria for her constant support and patience throughout my studies, I am forever grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

OVERSEAS VIOLENCE AND THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

Set against the ten-year period spanning the middle of the eighteenth century (1754-1764), the series of hostilities collectively referred to as the Seven Years' War marked a significant phase in the evolution of the early British Empire, with vast territorial gains in North America occurring concurrent to a fundamental transformation of the British presence in India.[1] The unprecedented scale of the conflict, both in terms of its global reach but also the fiscal-military resources involved, has previously led to vaunted descriptions such as 'the greatest upheaval the world had yet seen' or the first 'world' war.[2] This particular study, however, is less concerned with the apparent status of the war as a major geo-political event, and more interested with the human interactions that took place during it, namely, overseas encounters between Britons and indigenous populations, which resulted in an extremely violent and often fatal experience for those involved. Whilst recognising the many instances of violence inflicted upon non-Europeans throughout the period, the focus of this research lies primarily with alleged outrages directed against British subjects, acts described by contemporary sources as cruel, bloody, or fundamentally barbarous in nature.[3] Crucially, the broader impact of these confrontations was not restricted to those physically present at the time. Although the Seven Years' War played out on the fringes of the European-explored world, the exposure afforded to them by means of a vibrant and rapidly expanding press industry, brought the global scope of the conflict, as well as personal experience of the combatants, to the forefront of public attention in Britain.[4] As the first edition of the *Annual Register* declared in its opening preface:

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[1] The term 'Seven Years' War' is used throughout the study in a collective sense, referring to all local conflicts Britain participated in overseas from 1754-1764 that related to the broader intra-European confrontation. For an overview see Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (Harlow, 2011); Tom Pocock, *Battle for Empire: The Very First World War 1756-63* (London, 2002).

[2] Reginald Savory, *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany during the Seven Years War* (Oxford, 1966), p. vii.

[3] Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2003); Rebecca M. Brown, 'Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case Study of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial', *Journal of Asian Studies,* 65 (2006), pp. 91-113; Peter Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter with Native Americans in the French and Indian War', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and others: British Encounters with Indigenous peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999); pp. 123-148; Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge, 2001); Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008).

[4] David Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press 1720-1763', in Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors, and Clyve Jones (eds.), *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 65-81; Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth century*

> We have taken the war from its commencement. It is a subject which requires all the pains which we could bestow upon it, and deserves much more skilful workmen. None was ever more formed to interest curiosity; from the importance of the events, the dignity of the persons concerned, the greatness of the actions performed, and the amazing revolutions of fortune. The Reader will find the events of this war, which has been carried on in the four quarters of the world, and which he has hitherto seen in a scattered manner, united into one connected narrative.[5]

The perceived brutality of overseas warfare came to represent one of those so-called 'curiosities', and instances of hyperbolic violence committed in North America and the East Indies would provide news commentators with precisely the sort of graphic accounts craved by the out-of-door political classes. Admittedly, events of a more typical or mundane variety also attracted interest from the British press, but the exceptional and often emotionally-fraught temperament of a violent military engagement could, as they still do today, foster a type of reaction quite distinct from those caused by more generic topics of news.[6] This study explores the complex nature of that coverage, as well as some of the more significant, and to date, overlooked themes expressed in response to the violent subject matter.

Studies that focus on the development of popular culture during the eighteenth century, have all stressed in varying degrees the important role of the British news press.[7] News polemic - its language, tone, and the arguments felt necessary to engage with - reveal the issues held to be of concern or stake to wider audiences, but also give an indication as to *why* those particular subjects generated the type of reaction they did.[8] Thanks to a rapid expansion of news publications throughout the early 1700s, and increasing recognition at the time as to their perceived importance, accounts from Britons living or stationed

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Britain (Oxford, 2005), ch. 1-2; Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (California, 2012), pp. 1-33.

[5] *Annual Register of the Year 1758* (London, 1759), pp. iv-v. It is generally agreed that Edmund Burke was chief editor throughout the Seven Years' War, see James E. Tierney, 'Edmund Burke, John Hawkesworth, the "Annual Register", and the "Gentleman's Magazine"', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 42 (1978), pp. 57-72.

[6] Colley, *Captives*, p. 174.

[7] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 1; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855*(London, 2000), ch. 1.

[8] Marie Peters, *Pitt and Popularity: The Patriot Minister and London Opinion during the Seven Years' War* (Oxford, 1980), p. 24.

overseas during the Seven Years' war were catapulted to the forefront of public attention, the details, as Tim Fulford describes, considered 'shocking enough to be saleable'.[9] Press coverage afforded to these brutal, often bloody encounters helped to raise awareness of, and generate interest in the non-European world, but also provided a platform for a range of positions to be articulated. Recent studies have already shown how the later decades of the eighteenth century would see increased metropolitan scrutiny of British actions in North America and India, and the use of humanitarian language to highlight the perceived exploitation of the indigenous populations.[10] As this particular research demonstrates, however, news commentary produced in 1754-64 reveals an earlier and potentially more complex thematic framework. Though frequently presented in stark juxtaposition with 'Enlightened' European values, acts of violence committed by native forces during the Seven Years' War also communicated a sceptical, often self-deprecating analysis of British expansion. Yet in contrast with the implicit humanitarianism that often defined those later critiques of empire, commentary printed during the Seven Years' War that was of a more cynical disposition also demonstrates the tempering effects of an earlier popular mind-set, one grounded in military expediency, mercantile self-interest, and political opportunism. This mix of competing influences, however, was not simply an evolutionary bridge between two cultures or stages of press engagement. Though certainly a precursor to the sentimental revolution of the 1770s - described by Paul Langford, as a 'heightened sensitivity' to the social and moral problems of the age - public attitudes expressed in response to the hostilities of 1754-64, were in many respects unique.[11] Atrocities committed overseas led to highly fluid, pragmatic, yet often contradictory public discourse - the product of an unpredictable conflict that news commentators were forced to navigate as Britain abruptly moved from commercial power to burgeoning imperial metropole.

This research seeks to approach the Seven Years' War from a more holistic perspective, to explore the expansive nature of that conflict as understood by Britons at the time. There has been a tendency with previous studies to disaggregate the hostilities

[9] Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature and Transatlantic Culture 1756-1830* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 51-52.
[10] Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013); Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anti-colonialism* (New York, 2013), pp. 1-22.
[11] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1998), p. 461.

into their geographical components, treating each military theatre almost in isolation.[12] Such an approach is acceptable, particularly where a specific theme or subject is the stated focus. The danger is that a narrow analytical remit of this sort, potentially overlooks the day-to-day reality of public engagement with the Seven Years' War, both as a composite and *global* event. As Peter Marshall argues, artificially imposed boundaries often lead to an incoherent and disconnected view of what, arguably, was a more cohesive awareness of British overseas interests.[13] Works that focus exclusively on North America, for instance, risk overlooking how the broader conflict might have shaped public discourse in response to news from that particular region. In many respects, this particular research is no different; dedicated chapters explore the conflicts in Bengal and North America, with specific attention afforded to sensational acts of violence committed during each of those hostilities. Considered as part of a larger framework, however, the study demonstrates how coverage afforded to events from largely distinct military theatres, drew upon and contributed to a series of common themes and debates. Exoticism, racial prejudice, and concepts of orientalism, primitivism, military virtue, and personal honour, all helped to situate what were, ostensibly, unrelated circumstances into an overarching discussion relating to growing British involvement on the world stage.

The War and Popular Culture

The relationship between popular politics and military conflict in the mid-eighteenth century is a central feature of this study, one that has profited from the broad revival of imperial history, and renewed appreciation for the centrality of empire in forming a sense of British national identity.[14] The significance and impact of the Seven Years' War, in particular, has benefited immensely from this change in focus. Early studies, for instance, typically addressed the military and geo-political importance of the conflict, rather than treating it as a potential source for socio-cultural analysis. Military triumphs such as Plassey (1757) or Quebec (1759) were portrayed as celebratory milestones in the 'Great War for Empire', with heavy emphasis placed on the strategies underpinning those successes, or reasons why they should be thought of as directly relevant to British status in the modern

[12] See for instance Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* (London, 2001); Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1990).

[13] Peter J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America*, c. 1750-1783 (Oxford, 2005).

[14] For an overview of recent developments in eighteenth century historiography, see Matthew Grenby 'Introduction', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 34 (2011).

world.[15] Reflecting the pro-imperialist attitudes of the time, individuals such as J. R. Seeley stated that any history of imperial conflict from this period 'should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present (…) to set us thinking about the future and divining the destiny which is re-served for us.'[16] As a result, historians in the early twentieth century situated the Seven Years' War within a broader imperial narrative, a first step towards the providential expansion of British civilisation.[17] On the rare occasion where these studies did consider public engagement with the conflict, the focus tended to revolve around the assumed popularity enjoyed by William Pitt in his role as a war leader. Yet as later research would show, these early studies did little to explain the nature or extent of that popularity, seeing it as the innate result of Pitt's oratorical prowess and his skilful coordination of British military efforts.[18] There was no attempt to understand how or why specific events influenced public sentiment, or to define the term 'popularity', which in this context remained largely unambiguous and taken at face value. Pitt was popular because he *was* the great Parliamentarian of the age, the personification of British national destiny, which as Marie Peters highlights, chimed nicely with the 'self-conscious' imperialism' embraced by scholars of the early-twentieth century.[19]

It was not until the postcolonial period that studies of the Seven Years' War would start to move away from being little more than veiled propaganda for empire, yet despite the extensive body of research that helped to facilitate this process, the relationship between popular attitudes and international conflict during the mid-eighteenth century continued to attract only modest attention. The Seven Years' War remained, for the most part, the preserve of military historians or those interested in diplomatic relations between the European powers. Stephen Conway, for instance, notes how many studies recognised the scale and logistical complexity of the hostilities as a military event, but not as something that had wider influence on public attitudes or popular culture within Britain itself - a limited war, 'fought for limited ends and with limited means, which had a

[15] Lawrence Henry Gipson, 'The British Empire Before the American Revolution', vols. 6-8, *Political Science Quarterly*, 22 (1907), pp. 1-48; Julian Corbett, *England and the Seven Years War: A Study in Combined Strategy*, vols. 1-2 (London, 1907).
[16] J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Cambridge, 1893), p. 1; Wesley Frank Craven, 'Historical Study of the British Empire', *Journal of Modern History*, 6 (1934), p. 41.
[17] Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, Vol. 3 (New York, 1957).
[18] Peters, *Pitt and Popularity*, p. 1. See for instance, Dan Clark, 'News and Opinion concerning America in English Newspapers, 1754-1763' *Pacific Historical Review*, 10 (1941), pp. 75-82.
[19] Marie Peters, *The Elder Pitt* (New York, 1998), pp. 6-9; Peters, 'The Myth of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, Great Imperialist. Part I: Pitt and Imperial Expansion 1738–1763', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21 (1993), pp. 31-74.

correspondingly limited impact'.[20] The broader effects on the out-of-doors political world only started to achieve recognition in the 1980s, yet this shift would emerge not through any reappraisal of the conflict itself, but in response to a wider debate concerning the British political landscape throughout the early eighteenth century.[21] Although not the focus of this particular study, it is useful to consider, briefly, the consequence of those discussions for the purpose of context.

The pioneering work of Sir Lewis Namier, and his portrayal of a British parliamentary system devoid of party-based ideological division, established an academic consensus that would last for nearly four decades.[22] As Frank O' Gorman summarised, those who followed in the immediate footsteps of Namier, resigned the idea of discernible Tory principles surviving beyond the first Jacobite uprising, to the 'scrapheap of history'.[23] Indeed, the process has been referred to previously as an 'exorcism' of party politics from eighteenth century historiography.[24] The orthodoxy of a perceived Whig Supremacy, however, would come under increasing pressure as new research revealed an eighteenth century parliament and political-elite, far more polarised by ideological conviction than previously suggested. Revisionist studies, though in disagreement over issues such as the extent of Tory complicity with Jacobitism, helped to revitalise modern understanding of the Walpolean and Pelhamite political landscape.[25] As a result, a visible Tory faction that maintained a distinct presence on the parliamentary scene, and represented an attractive option for those frustrated with the Whig monopoly of state power, achieved newfound recognition.

The notion of a demonstrable and influential Tory-backed opposition, in turn fed a much wider discussion concerning British society and the emerging idea of an out-of-doors political culture - a concept, ultimately, that also underpins this thesis. Studies of urban-

[20] Stephen Conway, *War*, *State and Society in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006), p. 2.
[21] Jeremy Black, 'Eighteenth-Century English Politics: Recent Work and Current Problems', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 25 (1993), pp. 419-441.
[22] Sir Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (Oxford, 1929).
[23] Frank O' Gorman, 'The Tory Party, 1714-1760', *The Eighteenth Century,* 24 (1983), p. 276. See also, J.H. Plumb, *Origins of Political Stability* (London, 1967); Sir Lewis Namier & John Brooke (eds.), *History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754–1790* (1966).
[24] Brian Hill, 'Review of Linda Colley, In Defiance of Oligarchy. The Tory Party 1714-1760', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), pp. 824-825; Geoffrey Holmes, 'Eighteenth Century Toryism', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp. 755-760.
[25] See for instance Linda Colley 'The Loyal Brotherhood and the Cocoa Tree: The London Organization of the Tory Party, 1727-1760', *Historical Journal*, 10 (1977), pp. 77-95; J. C. D. Clark, *Revolution and Rebellion. State and Society in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1986); Eveline Cruickshanks, *Political Untouchables*, *The Tories and the '45* (New York, 1980); John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge, 1976).

provincial centres and the competing interest groups who operated within them, for instance, suggested that far from hubs of Namierite tranquillity, English towns were in fact hotbeds of political contention.[26] Nicholas Rogers would go further in his condemnation of the academic status-quo, criticising both traditional *and* revisionist interpretations that continued to portray popular politics as an arena used exclusively for and by the ruling elite, something in his view that did little to reveal the 'coherence and (…) complexity of urban radicalism' present at that time.[27] Others such as Reed Browning held a different opinion altogether, disagreeing with those believed to have deliberately aggrandised Tory strength. Browning, accused Linda Colley of 'fuzzy thinking' and 'analytical confusion'.[28] A more conciliatory view acknowledged the existence of a marginal Tory-led opposition, whilst maintaining the period still to be one characterised by unmatched political stability.[29] On balance, however, though some may have inflated the idea of widespread opposition to Whig hegemony, most agree with the premise that Tory influence 'remained politically relevant, ideologically significant and, not least, remarkably popular'.[30] The significance for this study is not the overhaul of the Namierite paradigm, rather the transformation of 'popular culture', as a concept, into a formative pillar of, and resource for, historical research.

Studies of public attitudes within mid-eighteenth century Britain - their extent, formation, transmission, and individuals or groups affected by them - are part a broader trend that has seen social history gradually superseded, in prevalence at least, by cultural history.[31] This does not mean social studies are now outdated, rather cultural approaches can supplement their findings and demonstrate how changes in society were, in part, a consequence of broader cultural shifts. As Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack describe it, 'if social history is concerned with life experience, cultural history is concerned with the meanings of those experiences'.[32] Although the range of studies in this area is considerable,

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[26] See Paul D. Halliday, *Dismembering the Body Politic: Partisan Politics in England's Towns, 1650-1730* (New York, 1998); Thomas Knox, 'Popular Politics and Provincial Radicalism', *Albion*, 11 (1979), pp. 224-41; John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1830* (Cambridge MA, 1983).
[27] Nicholas Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (New York, 1989), p. 247.
[28] Reed Browning, 'Review: In Defiance of Oligarchy', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 14 (1982), pp. 311-312.
[29] Geoffrey Holmes, 'The Achievement of Stability: The Social Context of Politics from the 1680s to the Age of Walpole' in John Cannon (ed.), *The Whig Ascendancy: Colloquies on Hanoverian England* (London, 1982), p. 2.
[30] O' Gorman, 'The Tory Party', p. 279.
[31] Paul Kleber Monod, 'Are You Getting Enough Culture? Moving from Social to Cultural History in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History Compass*, 6 (2008), pp. 91–108.
[32] Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, 'Defining Soldiers: Britain's Military, c.1740-1815', *War in History*, 20 (2013), p. 159.

the central role that foreign affairs played in stimulating popular sentiment throughout British society is of particular relevance to this research. Kathleen Wilson, in particular, has previously demonstrated how individual commercial enterprise, combined with a new-found sense of national identity, encouraged a 'noisy' image of empire to take root within the British popular mind-set, infusing an upwardly mobile middling class with a familiarity and aspiration for empire.[33] Bob Harris has made similar observations, though suggests that public engagement with overseas affairs was one viewed primarily through a lens of geo-political rivalry and European power politics.[34] Linda Colley, and more recently Paul Kleber Monod, share this interpretation but also highlight the significance of religion and war throughout the period, arguing that a *Protestant* Great Britain, consciously posited by the Whig administration against a *Catholic* France, was central to how Britons came to perceive themselves and their actions on the world stage.[35] An alternative viewpoint suggests British perceptions of foreign affairs were fundamentally continental, not imperial in nature, with public exposure afforded colonial expansion predicated on a strategic aim of maintaining the security of Hanoverian interests within Europe.[36] Despite disagreement as to which of those dynamics was the most important in shaping public attitudes towards overseas affairs, a common theme is the prominence that military conflict featured as a focus, justification, and medium for that engagement.

The mid-eighteenth century bore witness to two major European hostilities. Taking undeclared or local conflicts into account as well, Britain was essentially in a near-uninterrupted state of war from 1739-1763, almost a quarter of a century. Conway, in particular, has argued this was fundamental in shaping British society.[37] Aside from the

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33 Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 74-109; Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 19; Wilson, '"Empire of Virtue": The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, c.1720-1785', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 128 164.

34 Bob Harris 'American Idols', War and the Middling Ranks in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain', *Past and present*, 150 (1996), pp. 111-114; Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2002), p. 105.

35 Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 3rd edition (London, 2005). See also Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 400-405; Paul Kleber Monod, *Imperial Island: A History of Britain and its Empire 1660-1887* (Oxford, 2009), p. 190.

36 Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (London, 2007), p. 45; William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (eds.), *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010).

37 Conway, *War, State and Society*, pp. 1-32; Conway, 'War and National Identity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Isles', *The English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), pp. 863-893. Conversely, Langford argues that although those born after 1730 were unable to escape the effects of war, personal experience of significant military conflict was far less common among the older generation. See Langford *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 621.

immediate physical effects, the broader impact of such a prolonged period of military activity would manifest itself in a variety of ways - the emergence of a centralised, war-centric financial bureaucracy; changes to existing class-hierarchies and increased socio-economic mobility; the increasing appeal of civil, moral and philanthropic campaigns; and sporadic outbreaks of politically charged social unrest.[38] Although sustained military conflict may only have accelerated these developments, war in the mid-eighteenth century was nevertheless integral to that process and formed a backdrop against which public engagement with overseas affairs operated. The result, as Harris indicates, was a news industry whose content became monopolised by foreign affairs and that encouraged Britons to 'project' their imaginations, hopes, and anxieties on to those events.[39] In doing so, coverage of the Seven Years' War, the most expansive conflict Europeans had experienced by that point, became an evolving drama, one that captivated its audience and stimulated critical, often impassioned discussions about deep-rooted national concerns. As a result, the hostilities of 1754-64 have gained newfound recognition as a socially transformative event, a forum for the expression and shaping of public opinion, and a vital resource for exploring the development of popular attitudes throughout the period.[40]

Despite renewed academic interest with the Seven Years' War, studies tend to focus only on certain aspects - the political machinations of Fox, Newcastle, Pitt, and Bute; the loss of Minorca and trial of Admiral Byng; the invasion scare of 1758-9; the *Annus Mirablis;* or domestic opposition to government policy such as the Militia Bill, Prussian subsidies, and Treaty of Paris. A study by John Cardwell, for instance, explores representation of the conflict in contemporary ballads, broadsides, and satirical-prose, but remains concerned with 'the war's most intense, politically significant crisis'.[41] A recent collection of essays edited by Shaun Regan and Frans de Bruyn takes a similar approach, in that although the war is treated as a much wider cultural event, the chief aim is still to set the more prominent 'singular events' against a broader historical canvas, and provide those episodes

[38] See Jeremy Black, *Britain as a Military Power: 1688-1815* (London, 1999); E. A, Wrigley, Society and the Economy in the Eighteenth Century', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 72-95; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1783* (London, 1989); J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1997).
[39] B. Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, p. 7; Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford, 1993), p. 254; Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 628.
[40] Mark H. Danley, 'Introduction: The Problem of the Seven Years' War', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. xxiii-lvii.
[41] John Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism during the Seven Years War* (Manchester, 2004), p. 2.

with a greater sense of context.[42] This does not mean that prominent geo-political issues were unimportant or did not elicit strong popular reaction; they did. As the prominent pamphleteer William Burke, for instance, said of his own account of the North American settlements:

> I fixed my eye principally on some capital matters, which might the most fully engage and best reward the attention of the reader; and in treating of those I dwelt only upon such events as seemed to me to afford some political instruction, or to open the characters of the principal actors in those great scenes.[43]

A major reason why events like the defeat of General Braddock in 1755 or capture of Quebec in 1759 *were* able to generate such a heated public response, is precisely because their outcome did have profound implications for those in power at Westminster.

The ability to manage events abroad, but also withstand as well as capitalise on the ensuing popular response at home, was crucial to the political fortunes of competing administrations, the achievements of the Pitt-Newcastle Ministry in cultivating patriot interests in the City being one such example.[44] Studies that explore the cultural impact of the Seven Years' War, therefore, are to a certain degree justified in focusing on those issues that had significant ramifications for the state. Indeed, as chapter one considers in more detail, the reporting of a significant crisis for political gain, often referred to as 'paper warfare', was a fundamental aspect of press output throughout the period.[45] As the MP James Ogelthorpe remarked in a publication from 1755, for instance, the impending conflict would be an 'orator's war', the skill of such individuals being that public clamour could easily be created for potentially ruinous military action 'despite there being 'not a man in England but must lose by it'.[46] Crucially, however, news polemic generated by the Seven Years' War was not restricted simply to events now considered as major developments for those in power at the time.

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[42] Francis De Bruyn and Shaun Regan (eds.), 'Introduction' in *The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Toronto, 2014), pp. 3-4.
[43] William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America* (London, 1757), preface.
[44] Peters, *Pitt and Popularity,* pp. 19-24; Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years' War, 1757-1762* (Cambridge, 1985).
[45] Thomas Keymer, 'Paper Wars: Literature and/as conflict during the Seven Years' War', in De Bruyn and Regan (eds.), *The Culture of the Seven Years' War*, pp.119-146; Mark H. Danley, 'The British Political Press and Military Thought during the Seven Years War', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. 359-399.
[46] James Edward Oglethorpe, *The Naked Truth* (London, 1755), pp. 10-16.

Public engagement with the conflict from 1754-64, especially its global context, increasingly focussed on situations described as 'settler experiences', and alleged atrocities committed against Britons stationed or living overseas, represented a particularly visceral form of human-interest story.[47] Exploring these episodes, specifically the discussions they facilitated in print, is essential for achieving a fuller understanding of press culture during the Seven Years' War. By considering the response to circumstances defined by their personal characteristics, as opposed simply to geo-political stature, this research further demonstrates the complexity of popular debate throughout the period. In particular, the study highlights the apparent volatility of public reactions that were often determined less by the specifics of the violence in question, and more by whether the motivations and individuals behind those actions were presented as disingenuous or duplicitous - a recurring theme throughout this study.

Violence, Warfare, and Public Attitudes

The subject of violence in the eighteenth century has generated an abundance of scholarship, from works that explore specific examples of violent behaviour – warfare, violent crime, capital punishment, slavery, domestic violence, urban disorder – to others that consider the popular culture associated with those issues.[48] The breadth of research indicates the centrality of violence in eighteenth century society as a day-to-day theme, something all Britons experienced either directly or indirectly. It is the latter aspect, which is of particular relevance to this study. As Andrew Cayton notes, that Britons regularly committed violence upon each other 'is not in and of itself remarkable. What is remarkable is that for many of them violence *became* a problem, a source of confusion and shame, a site of contested meaning and identity, a test of human nature and human agency.'[49] It is the perception and representation of violence, how to define as well as react to it, and what those responses said about their own society that commentators repeatedly grappled with. In the broadest sense, violence was the coercive use of force to deny the natural liberty of an individual to do as they choose; the ongoing debate was the necessity to employ such measures in certain situations, versus the increasing emphasis placed on the

[47] Colley, *Captives*, pp. 153-154.
[48] See Alexandra Shepard, 'Review Article: Violence and Civility in Early Modern Europe' *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), pp. 593-603; J.A. Sharpe and J.R. Dickinson, 'Revisiting the "Violence We Have Lost": Homicide in Seventeenth-Century Cheshire', *English Historical Review*, 131 (2016), pp. 293-323.
[49] Andrew Cayton, '"The Constant Snare of the Fear of Man": Authority and Violence in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic', in Patrick Griffin, Robert G. Ingram, Peter S. Onuf, and Brian Schoen (eds.), *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy: The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era* (Virginia, 2015), pp. 21-39.

principle of consent.[50] With their rights perceived to be enshrined in common law and by the Glorious Revolution, mid-eighteenth century Britons saw themselves as the freest of nations, whose personal liberty and professed toleration lay in stark contrast with the despotism of other European rivals. The problem, as already outlined, is that such rhetoric did not often correspond with the violent realities of British society or its conduct towards others.

This research focuses on the specific issue of military-related violence, namely, the representation of, and reaction to alleged atrocities committed during times of war. The study has benefited from works that explore the intellectual and legal foundations of European approaches to military conflict in the mid-eighteenth century, something explored by chapter two in more detail. It is important to note, that public discussion afforded to military related violence, and subsequent debates over the response it warranted, did not begin with the Seven Years' War.[51] Alleged atrocities that took place during European hostilities from the previous century, not only received significant attention in print at the time, but that engagement also explored many of the same issues that would later feature in news commentary produced in the 1750s.[52] The Irish Rebellion of 1641, for instance, led to an outpouring of inflammatory reports in England that described all manner of outrages committed against the Protestant community, in turn, reflecting deep-rooted religious, ethnic, and socio-economic tensions prevalent at the time.[53] The two periods, of course, were very different in terms of political-intellectual culture, but also the extent to which the press itself had evolved between the seventeenth and eighteenth century - the news trade of the Seven Years' War era having become more uniform in structure and output, but also accepted in terms of its recognised function within British society. That said, material published throughout the early modern period relating to violent military conduct, and the popular dialogue it generated, is certainly precedent to the sources, themes, and arguments covered by this study.

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[50] Cayton, 'The Constant Snare of the Fear of Man', pp. 22-24.

[51] For an overview of the relationship between violence and military conflict see Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan (eds.), *Theatres of Violence: Massacre, Mass Killing and Atrocity throughout History* (New York, 2012).

[52] Holger Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies: Atrocity in the American Revolutionary War', *Past & Present*, 230 (2016), p. 127.

[53] See for instance John Morrill, 'The Drogheda Massacre in Cromwellian Context', in *Age of atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 242-265; Morrill, 'Conclusion: The Rebellion in Text and Context', in Eamon Darcy (ed.), *The 1641 Depositions and the Irish Rebellion* (London, 2012), pp. 185-195; Inga Jones, '"Holy War"? Religion, Ethnicity and Massacre during the Irish Rebellion 1641-2', in Eamon Darcy (ed.), *The 1641 Depositions and the Irish Rebellion* (London, 2012), pp. 129-142; Jones, 'A Sea of Blood? Massacres during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, 1641-53', in Dwyer and Ryan (eds.), *Theatres of Violence*, pp. 63-80.

One issue recent historiography has explored in particular detail is the apparent reduction of military violence from the seventeenth onwards. A study by Julius R. Ruff, for instance, highlights the decreasing impact of war on civilian life, the apparent result of greater professionalism, discipline, and logistical infrastructure within European armed forces.[54] This idea of diminishing violence in European warfare goes hand-in-hand with a broader narrative, referred to by Norbert Elias as a 'civilising process', where emerging notions of civility, politeness, and sensibility, lead to a less violent society more generally.[55] Although many have expressed reservations that a growth in civility was facilitated by a single, uniform process - parallel developments such urbanisation, improved literacy, as well as increased religious and political stability all contributed to a broader cultural shift - the notion that Britons gradually experienced less violence in their day-to-day lives, remains a central theme and focus of debate.[56] Yet returning to the specific question of public attitudes concerning violent warfare, the idea of declining levels of violence in British society draws attention to a more complex issue, one central to this study, the indeterminate nature of violence.

The polarising nature of war has always led to competing interpretations as to what actions are acceptable. As Mark Levene and Penny Roberts highlight, ‘what is evocative for one group of people may be viewed in a quite different way by another (...) one man’s blood bath becomes another’s just desserts'.[57] Yet a recurring feature of violence in European warfare, however, is its lack of definition as an action in its own right. Wayne E. Lee, for instance, has carried out a sweeping study of Anglo-American conflict, depicting English and later American interpretations of war as a constantly evolving distinction between 'brothers and barbarians'. [58] Accordingly, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of an individual act depended more on whether the actors involved were within or beyond the perceived boundaries of civilisation. Such fluid perceptions were, in part, a result of older debates relating to state formation, a process accepted as violent. The use of violence by British forces in North America and India, for instance, was acceptable if the intention behind it was for self-defence, or as Cayton argues the preservation and promotion of

[54] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2001).
[55] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, revised edition (Oxford, 2000).
[56] Sharpe and Dickinson, 'Revisiting the "Violence We Have Lost"', p. 314.
[57] Mark Levene, 'Introduction', in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History* (New York, 1999), p.3.
[58] Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare 1500-1865* (Oxford, 2011), p. 166.

civility.[59] The issue, however, is whether those same justifications applied to a non-European perspective, as a rationale for the permissible use of violence against Britons. As further studies show, violence was often dependant on the legal boundaries under which those transactions occurred, the limits of British authority around the globe determining the acceptability of the act in question and, crucially, what the response should be.[60] The latter point is particularly relevant when considering public engagement with the Seven Years' War, as violence instigated by indigenous forces in regions where an invasive British presence was at best tentative, forced news commentators to weigh their own opinions as to what constituted appropriate military conduct, against the reality of life on a disputed frontier.

The apparent changeability of violence, in terms of public perceptions relating to war, supports those who doubt that a single process led to a decline in violent behaviour throughout British society, or that such a decline is easily measurable. Indeed, as Alexandra Shepard argues, debate has shifted away from *if* the eighteenth century saw a reduction in violence, to *what* counted as violent behaviour and by whom; whether talk of decline is 'merely the displacement and repackaging, of violent interaction'.[61] These themes are central to this thesis, which though not intended as a quantifiable analysis of attitudes towards violent warfare, nevertheless, builds on the idea that military violence as a concept in mid-eighteenth century popular culture, was highly fluid, open to interpretation, and used for a variety of competing agendas. Press exposure afforded to alleged atrocities committed overseas during the Seven Years' War, provides a sense of that complexity.

Despite showing many definitions of violence to be fundamentally ephemeral, as a starting point the study still needs to broadly identify the type of episode that features throughout this research. Recent studies by Ian Haywood and Holger Hoock have been of particular use despite their focus on a later historical period. The former looks at the attention afforded to hyperbolic violence as a distinct Romantic trope, while the latter is primarily interested in battlefield atrocities committed during the American Revolution and

[59] Cayton, '"The Constant Snare of the Fear of Man", pp. 21-39.
[60] Eliga Gould, 'Zones of Law, Zones of Violence': The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (2003); Elizabeth Mancke, 'The Languages of Liberty in British North America, 1607-1776' in Jack P. Greene (ed.), *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010).
[61] Shepard, 'Review Article: Violence and Civility', p. 594. See also Ethan H. Shagan, 'Early Modern Violence from Memory to History: A Historiographical Essay', in Micheál Ó Siochrú and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Ireland: 1641: Contexts and Reactions* (Manchester, 2013), pp. 18-36.

their incorporation into subversive political narratives.[62] Both works are similar, however, in what they see as the 'extreme' or 'catastrophic' nature of the incidents in question. Where Haywood approaches the issue from a literary perspective, identifying a 'vignette' of violence, that was sensational, visceral, and dramatic in character, Hoock focuses on the term 'atrocity', describing it as a violent military engagement considered to be in defiance of military custom, but also a more general experience that anyone might label an atrocity, irrespective of the event itself. Central to both is the apparent exceptionality of that violence, a visually shocking, physical act that appealed to the senses, and a decision that was controversial, as well as explicitly confrontational in terms of challenging moral or legal conventions. Though only focussing on incidents explicitly referred to as 'massacres', Will Coster also provides some useful insight, describing notable features such as the overwhelming or wanton use of force, as well as a criterion of scale; 'massacres are distinctly different from the murder of individuals (...) equally important is that massacres are not carried out by individuals but by groups'.[63] This particular study uses a looser interpretation for the type of action and episode under consideration. A Native American raid may only have resulted in a few casualties, and so not qualify as a massacre under the definitions mentioned, yet the shocking nature would frequently lead to its treatment by news commentators as if it were, or at least similar to a massacre. These are events that were 'unquestionably one-sided', with those killed usually thought of as innocents or victims.[64] It is the perception and presentation of those circumstances that is of chief concern, not the actual specifics of what did or did not occur. Chapters three and five, for instance, explore the public response to acts that took place during explicitly defined military encounters, whereas chapters four and six consider the response to incidents that occurred beyond the recognised parameters of a battlefield - the key feature, is the overriding sense of horror, vulnerability, and duplicity subsequently associated with those circumstances. The focus, therefore, is not explaining or defining violent behaviour in itself, rather the conveyance of specific themes, arguments or objectives in reaction to that violence.[65]

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[62] Ian Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776-1832* (Basingstoke, 2006); Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies', pp. 124-159.

[63] Will Coster, 'Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War', in Levene and Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History*, pp. 89-105; Eric Carlton, *Massacres: An Historical Perspective* (Aldershot, 1994), p. 1.

[64] Levene, 'Introduction', p. 5.

[65] For a similar approach see Alison Games, 'Violence on the Fringes: The Virginia (1622) and Amboyna (1623) Massacres', in *History*, 99 (2014), pp. 505-549; Antony Milton, 'Marketing a Massacre: Amboyna, the East India

Press coverage afforded to the more violent aspects of the Seven Years' War was mercurial, a direct response to the events themselves and the inherently shocking nature of those circumstances, but also a result of deeply engrained, yet evolving socio-cultural attitudes concerning broader themes such as war, civilisation, security, and race. Marshall and Williams, Troy Bickham, David Milobar and Kate Telscher among others, have all explored British perceptions of non-Europeans - Amerindian and Mughal society in particular - and show that shifting strategic concerns throughout the wider period created a variety of malleable images that altered to suit changing geo-political priorities.[66] Yet just as press coverage of foreign affairs was used to express underlying national concerns, so too were public attitudes with regards to non-European lands and their inhabitants, often a reflection on the state of British society at that time. As chapter two explores, the depiction of Indians as 'Noble Savages', articulated a growing resentment towards the perceived corruption and licentiousness of the European world. Similarly, allegoric descriptions of the perceived decadence and degeneracy of the Imperial court at Delhi drew attention to autocratic displays by governments at home. That said, the research is not concerned with perceptions of Native American or Mughal society, specifically, nor even the subject of race in a general sense. Instead, the study explores how press engagement with the Seven Years' War, and the perceived brutality of warfare practiced in the non-European theatres of that conflict, provided an arena for a more complex public dialogue to emerge in which race was but one aspect. As Richard Bourke indicates, studies of violent social conflicts often distort that which they seek to understand, 'the result is bafflement in the face of the violence that accompanies such conflicts, commonly reckoned to be "savage" or "senseless" and beyond all rational accounting.'[67] Building on that assertion, and through a reappraisal of news-related sources printed from 1754-64, this research demonstrates that coverage of alleged atrocities committed against Britons overseas, reveals a period of vibrant, often overlooked public engagement with issues that would continue to grow in prominence - the use of violence by non-Europeans as a perceived response to British global expansion.

Company and the Public Sphere in Early Stuart England', in Peter Lake, Stephen Pincus (eds.), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 168-190.

[66] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', pp. 65-81; Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, ch.1-2; Fulford, *Romantic Indians*, pp. 51-52; Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 111-114; Peter J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge M.A, 1982).

[67] Richard Bourke, 'Languages of Conflict and the Northern Ireland Troubles', *Journal of Modern History*, 83 (2011), p. 544. Bourke considers contemporary interpretations of Irish Republican violence, and concludes that historical perceptions of conflict, in general, are determined by 'languages of conflict that are poorly designed to represent the phenomenon they hope to explain'.

Structure and Focus

The study consists of three sections. Chapter one assesses the broader medium of the print industry and process by which details of violent overseas affairs were produced, disseminated, and arguably created into items of public interest. Providing an overview of the mid-eighteenth century news press, and the culture associated with it, the chapter outlines the main reasons why producers and consumers of news afforded such attention to foreign affairs, but also considers the limitations and potential issues associated with any analysis of such material. In a similar fashion, chapter two provides further context by exploring popular attitudes relating to the two themes that are of particular relevance to the study - the non-European world, and the idea of universal military values. The chapter considers various intellectual discussions that took place in the decades immediately prior to the Seven Years' War, specifically relating to the perceived differences between European and non-Europeans, and explores how those perceptions provided the basis for many of the discussions and debates that would later feature in public discourse.

The remaining sections address the conflict itself. Chapter three explores the North American theatre of the Seven Years' War, and the inherent contradictions of news commentary that presented violent military engagements, such as the defeat at Monongahela in 1755, as anathema to European military principles, yet often rationalised those same occurrences as having taken place within the acceptable parameters of a defined military paradigm. Chapter four continues to explore this theme of duality by addressing the issue of non-combatants and frontier violence directed against British settlements throughout the French and Indian War. Sensationalist accounts of torture and other atrocities committed against the civilian populace, define a popular image of the conflict, however, news coverage printed at the time reveals a more complex picture. Open revulsion towards the native inhabitants was often expressed alongside a more critical analysis of the motivations underpinning that violence, and the antagonistic behaviour of the colonial settlers themselves, something typically explored from a post-1764 perspective.[68]

The focus then moves to India and Company expansion in Bengal from 1756-1764. Addressing a propensity by previous studies to downplay the extent of public engagement with India before 1765, chapter five explores coverage afforded to the so called Black Hole

[68] Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies', p. 124-159; Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, pp. vii-19.

of Calcutta, and suggests that events in India received far more attention than has previously been suggested, facilitated in large part by graphic accounts of violence. Building on that assertion, chapter six explores a series of encounters between British and Mughal forces throughout the period, and the way subsequent news reports used those events to undermine the legitimacy of successive indigenous governments in Bengal. As with the North American section, however, the chapter also shows that press coverage afforded to these instances of violence, reveal a more sceptical attitude towards British involvement in Bengal, and embryonic forms of critique largely associated with the period after the Seven Years' War.

The study focuses primarily on North America and India, as opposed to the other non-European theatres of the Seven Years' War - West Africa, the Philippines, South America, and the Caribbean. This is not to say these overseas territories did not witness heavy fighting, or generated little coverage and discussion in print. The British expedition to capture Havana in 1762, for instance, proved to be one of the most significant campaigns of the war, both in terms of its geo-political consequences, but also as a subject that led to heated public debate concerning what outcome Britain wanted from the hostilities. Crucially, however, a distinguishing feature of the hostilities that took place in North America and India from 1754-64 is the prominent role played by indigenous forces in those local conflicts. Although fighting would take place in a variety of far-flung possessions, for the most part these episodes were European-on-European affairs, fought between regular troops deployed overseas, or rival European settlers living in those territories. Violent acts committed by Europeans against other Europeans certainly occurred during the conflict, and where relevant have been explored, yet it is public discourse fostered by interactions with non-European populations which is the chief concern, in part, because of the specific themes raised by those circumstances in relation to the issue of overseas expansion. One area that does not fit as easily within this context, is violence perpetrated by slaves against Britons living overseas.

Enslaved Africans working on English sugar plantations throughout the period, though not indigenous to those regions, were still different or set apart from Europeans in terms of perceived temperament, culture, appearance, and values. From that perspective, episodes such as the Slave uprising on Jamaica in 1760, known as Tacky's Revolt, potentially meet the criteria for the type of incidents covered by this study. Violent, overseas conflicts that took place against the backdrop of the Seven Years' War, involved hostile encounters

with a non-European population who did not appear to adhere to military or moral conventions, and afforded attention by domestic news audiences.[69] The *London Magazine*, for instance, would comment how the revolt was 'the most cruel and most terrible' example of its kind.[70] Indeed, Claudius Fergus notes that fear of insurrections after the 1760 rebellion was such that many in the press described African slaves as the 'natural enemy' of English colonists.[71] Yet despite similarities between reports of violence committed by Amerindian or Mughal forces, and instances of slave unrest that occurred throughout 1754-64, the latter does not feature in this study because of their relative infrequency but, primarily, because of the context in which those circumstances took place. Although black populations in the Caribbean greatly outnumbered their white counterparts, slave uprisings still took place in a political, economic, and cultural environment where European authority was dominant, despite those in Britain who saw the plantocracy as representing the fringes of polite society.[72] By contrast, violence committed in Bengal or North America took place in regions perceived to be exotic, but also where the European presence was tentative and seemingly dependent on the decisions of an established non-European power - themes that would feature heavily in public discourse that questioned the wisdom or appropriateness of military expansion overseas.

It is wrong to assume that attitudes expressed in news commentary can provide a full picture of the popular climate in Britain throughout the period in question. As existing studies note, public opinion in the eighteenth century was more associated with those who read and engaged in the production of newsprint, as opposed to a general or national mood.[73] Indeed, as the next chapter explores in more detail, the press was as much a device for influencing the attitudes of specific groups within British society – namely, the polite middling classes - as it was a genuine reflection of the concerns and convictions of

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[69] News of Tacky's Revolt featured in *London Magazine*, Jul. 1760, p. 366; *London Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 90; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1760, p. 307; *British Magazine,* Jul. 1760, p. 443; *Edinburgh Magazine*; Jun. 1760; p. 224.

[70] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 90.

[71] Claudius Fergus,'"Dread of Insurrection": Abolitionism, Security, and Labor in Britain's West Indian Colonies, 1760-1823', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 66 (2009), p. 758. See also Diane Paton, 'Punishment, Crime, and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica', *Journal of Social History*, 34 (2001), p. 932; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, 1982), ch. 11.

[72] T. R. Clayton, 'Sophistry, Security, and the Socio-Political Structure of the American Revolution; or, Why Jamaica did not Rebel', *Historical Journal,* 29 (1986), pp. 319-44.

[73] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society* (London, 2000), pp. 28-64; Jeremy Black, 'The Press and Politics in the Eighteenth Century', *Media History*, 8 (2002), pp. 175-182; Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1987); Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995).

the wider population.[74] Still, the press was also a central feature of metropolitan culture at that time, articulating both long held and emerging attitudes concerning a range of issues. Violence committed during the Seven Years' War represented one such matter.[75] For much of the early eighteenth century, overseas theatres in European conflicts were treated as 'sideshows', largely removed from, and of little interest to, the British out-of-door political classes.[76] The parallel conflicts fought in North America and Bengal from 1754-64, however, would help to stimulate a newfound appetite for news pertaining to these vast, seemingly exotic territories - their history, geography, inhabitants, day-to-day affairs, and excessive violence that appeared to characterise the warfare practiced there.[77] The following chapters explore coverage afforded to those violent transactions, and the complex, often surprising themes expressed in public discourse as a result.

[74] Peters, *Pitt and Popularity*, p. 23.
[75] Colley, *Captives*, p. xv; Black, 'The Press and Politics', p. 180
[76] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, p. 11.
[77] Stephen Conway, 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783', *The William Mary Quarterly*, 59 (2002), p. 79; Steel, *The English Atlantic,* pp. 251-279.

SECTION ONE

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: POPULAR ATTITUDES AND THE PRESS

CHAPTER ONE

OVERSEAS AFFAIRS AND THE BRITISH PRESS, CIRCA 1755

By the mid-1750s, the press had become the principal vehicle for the mass-dissemination of information throughout Britain, and an enthusiastically embraced aspect of polite, metropolitan society.[1] As Samuel Johnson observed in the *Idler*, for instance, the writers of news were entirely 'necessary in a nation where much wealth produces much leisure, and one part of the people has nothing to do but to observe the lives and fortunes of the other.'[2] Although the circulation and perceived significance of early print sources had evolved rapidly over the course of the seventeenth century, the lapsing of censorship laws in 1694, would lead to changes in the content, quantity, and function of news commentary. Throughout England, for instance, the number of news titles in print is estimated to have jumped from zero in 1695, to over forty by 1750.[3] The expansion in London - the largest producer and consumer of newspapers at that time - was even more considerable with the appearance of so many new titles thought to have caused problems for even the most rapacious newsreader. As Jeremy Black notes, the *London Journal* complained that London coffee houses were so over-stocked with newspapers, 'that there is never a politician, not even of those smoke three or four pipes of the best Virginia [tobacco] at a sitting (...) who has time or patience enough to read them half over.'[4] Nevertheless, by the Seven Years' War newsprint was widely accessible, popular, and an influential industry in its own right, affording unprecedented exposure and public scrutiny to foreign affairs. Whereas later sections of this study explore how news commentators reported overseas violence, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a broader overview of the medium by which that news was transmitted, and the role it played in shaping eventual output.

The rapid development of the press during the eighteenth century has already been the focus for a number of studies, yet the fluid and sporadic nature of that expansion has made it a complex subject to approach. Previous research has often explored relatively

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[1] Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1987); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society* 1695-1855 (London, 2000), pp. 29-64; Bob Harris, *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 13-47; Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: As Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (London, 1987), pp. 189-197; Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public Opinion in Eighteenth Century Britain and America* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 5.
[2] 'The Idler, No. 7', in *Universal Chronicle*, 20 May 1758, p. 57.
[3] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 29; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 1.
[4] *Daily Journal,* 24 Jan. 1721, quoted in Black, *The English Press*, p. 20.

focused areas of interest - the evolution of an individual publication, circulation and readership, the growth of provincial newspapers, or the representation of a specific genre across the medium.[5] Of particular relevance to this thesis, are studies that explore public engagement with foreign affairs and overseas conflict specifically. Stephen Conway, for instance, has shown that publication of pamphlets relating to non-European news increased dramatically following the outbreak of hostilities in 1754; twenty-four appeared in 1752 compared to the eighty-eight published in 1756.[6] No longer the isolated or removed occurrences they had been to earlier generations, by the mid-eighteenth century foreign affairs had become central to, as well as indicative of, the continued prosperity of the nation-at-large.[7] Black reiterates this sense of importance, showing that newspapers often made efforts to print colonial news items under separate headings, emphasising their distinctiveness.[8] Others have explored similar themes by focussing on the growing fascination with empire and the exotic throughout the period. Studies into eighteenth century library loans, for instance, give a sense of the appetite British readers possessed for travel narratives or literature that provided fresh insights into those parts of the world that remained 'unclaimed' by Europeans.[9] Yet although the development of what is generally referred to as eighteenth century 'print culture' has generated significant historiography, to provide context for this specific research it is important to re-consider aspects of that process by which overseas news was collated, presented, and, ultimately, transformed into material for public consumption.

A broader understanding of what Victoria Gardner describes as 'the business of news' - its contributors, proprietors, audience, function, and socio-political climate in which it operated - is essential for evaluating sources published throughout the Seven Years' War,

[5] Examples of previous studies that focus on a specific aspect of the press include G. A. Cranfield, 'The 'London Evening Post', 1727-1744: A Study in the Development of the Political Press', *Historical Journal*, 6 (1963), pp. 20-37; Hannah Barker, 'Catering for Provincial Tastes: Newspapers Readership and Profit in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp. 42-61;, pp. 65-80; Peter King, 'Making Crime News: Newspapers, Violent Crime and the Selective Reporting of Old Bailey Trials in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Crime History and Society*, 13 (2009), pp. 91-116.

[6] Stephen Conway, 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783', *The William Mary Quarterly*, 59 (2002), p. 79; Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 2.

[7] David Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press 1720-1763'', in Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors, Clyve Jones (eds)., *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 65-81.

[8] Jeremy Black, 'Continuity and Change in the British Press, 1750-1833', *Publishing History*, 26 (1994), p. 67; Bob Harris '"American Idols", War and the Middling ranks in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain', *Past and present*, 150 (1996), p. 123.

[9] Margaret Hunt, 'Racism, Imperialism and the Traveller's Gaze in Eighteenth century England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), p. 337.

and commentary expressed in response to the violent subject matter generated by those hostilities.[10] As Thomas Keymer remarks, the close-knit relationship between events on the ground and subsequent reporting of those events in the press, was such that news literature 'might even become (*pace* Clausewitz) the continuation of war by other means.'[11] Described at the time as 'paper warfare', commentators, politicians, and mercantile interests used the press to solicit public support for their own agenda.[12] Overseas violence committed during the Seven Years' War might have provided the subject of focus, but the disputes, impetus, and convictions of those involved in the formation of news polemic, played a significant role in shaping wider public interest in the conflict. Beginning with a broad analysis of news press output, including the range of publication types in circulation at the outbreak of hostilities in 1754, the chapter will move on to explore how overseas reports came to feature in print and the reasons why commentators and audiences afforded them such prominence. In doing so, this section of the study evaluates the nature of press engagement with overseas conflict throughout the period, but also provides perspective for the main body of the thesis, which explores public discourse generated by that exposure and the various motivations underpinning those discussions.

Defining the News Press: Format, Output, and Circulation.

The British news trade was a multifaceted industry that had already undergone rapid change in the decades preceding the Seven Years' War. The press was not, however, a homogenous entity and should not be equated simply with London. Printers based in metropolitan centres across Britain, including Dublin and Edinburgh, possessed distinctive characteristics, with broader developments throughout the news trade often varying depending on location.[13] Uriel Heyd and Gardner, for instance, demonstrate how English provincial newspapers represented a diverse and influential source of public discourse.[14] As noted in the *Idler*:

> Not many years ago the nation was content with one gazette; but now we have not only in the metropolis papers for every morning

[10] Victoria E. M. Gardner, *The Business of News in England, 1760-1820* (London, 2016).
[11] Thomas Keymer, 'Paper Wars: Literature and/as Conflict during the Seven Years' War', in Francis De Bruyn and Shaun Regan (eds.), *The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World* (Toronto, 2014) p. 119.
[12] Ibid., pp. 128-132; Gardner, *The Business of News*, pp. 4-8.
[13] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), pp. 246-247.
[14] Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, p. 23; Gardner, *The Business of News*, pp. 2-10.

> and every evening, but almost every large town has its weekly historian, who regularly circulates his periodical intelligence, and fills the villages of his district with conjectures on the events of war, and with debates on the true interest of Europe.[15]

Yet while recognising the importance and distinctiveness of regional news output, particularly in cities with significant overseas links - Liverpool, Glasgow, Bristol, Plymouth – as centre of a trans-Atlantic press network, printers based in London would still likely be first to publish details of a significant foreign incident or quickly receive and reproduce that news.[16] Indeed, others argue that provincial news titles were often entirely reliant on the capital for political and foreign news.[17] This issue, and related discussions concerning differences within the press at a local level, is of less concern here, the study focussing on press engagement in a broader sense and the type of themes articulated by means of newsprint. Furthermore, although this research mainly focuses on material printed or circulated in London from 1754-1764, where pertinent it has also drawn upon sources printed throughout Britain. Of greater use is clarifying the type of publication that features in this study, rather than where it was printed.

Existing studies differ in their definition of an eighteenth century news publication. One method has been to focus specifically on the term 'newspaper', with earlier research stating that such publications were those concerned, primarily, with discussing a broad range of current affairs.[18] It also the case, however, that many forms of news polemic from the period do not fit within such narrowly defined criteria - single-issue essay sheets, pamphlets, or larger stand alone accounts for example. Another approach has been to focus less on specific content or format, and more on regularity of appearance. Jeremy Black, for instance, has previously made a distinction between newspapers and periodicals, taking news press to mean any newspaper or journal produced on a weekly basis.[19] Titles produced with such frequency, irrespective of size or style, by their very nature concentrated on issues or events ‘current’ to that particular edition. By definition, they

[15] 'The Idler, No. 31', in *Universal Chronicle*, 4 Nov. 1758, p. 249.
[16] Ian K. Steel, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, 1986), ch. 11.
[17] Christine Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1997), p. 210; B. Harris, *A Patriot Press*, p. 10. For an alternative view, emphasising the importance and diversity of the provincial news press, see Gardner, *The Business of News*, pp. 2-10.
[18] Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper 1620-1660* (Cambridge MA., 1961), p. 1.
[19] Black, *The English Press*, pp. xiv-xv.

engaged in the dissemination or analysis of news. Compared with more established formats, weekly newspapers were the 'new media' of the eighteenth century, Uriel Heyd describing the rapid expansion of individual titles as indication of their increasing popularity and influence.[20] Yet as Michael Harris notes, that expansion was also the result of ongoing attempts to circumvent government stamp duties.[21] Commercial survival in a highly competitive arena depended on, among other things, an ability to reduce costs where possible; most newspapers altered their format and occasionally title to reduce rates levied against them. The range of newspaper titles does not equate, necessarily, with how popular the medium was more generally. Indeed, many highlight the difficulty in placing an exact figure on the number of papers in circulation, particularly during the early eighteenth century.[22] By the Seven Years' War, however, a clearer picture emerges.

By the outbreak of hostilities in 1755, the appearance of a newspaper and expectations as to its function, are described as having reached a 'state of equilibrium', allowing for a reasonably accurate assessment.[23] In terms of content, newspapers from the period were somewhat basic if compared with the more detailed editorial publications of later decades. Detached or distant in tone, newspaper articles tended to be short, anonymous, and impersonal accounts, often printed verbatim from personal correspondence without deeper context. Despite their limitations, the individual components of a newspaper - from advertisements through to obituaries - all played a role in the communication of news, something described as producing 'a reasonably effective, if socially limited view of the contemporary scene'.[24] In London, there were six newspapers published every week by the mid-eighteenth century, a further six on a tri-weekly basis, and six more published daily. Analysis of stamp records show that in 1750 approximately 7.3 million stamps were purchased, increasing to 9.4 million by 1760 with over five million used exclusively for London based titles. As a paper was likely to be read by more than one individual, and because readership was higher in the capital compared with other parts of Britain, studies suggest at least a quarter of those living in London had regular sight of a

[20] Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, p. 31; Alex Barber, '"It is Not Easy What to Say of Our Condition, Much Less to Write It" The Continued Importance of Scribal News in the Early Eighteenth century', *Parliamentary History*, 32 (2013), pp. 293-316.
[21] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 23-32; *The English Press*, pp. 20-21; B. Harris, *A Patriot Press*, pp. 15-17.
[22] Black, *The English Press,* p. 15; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, p. 16.
[23] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, p. 19, pp. 162-164.
[24] Ibid., p 176; Black, *The English Press* p. 26.

newspaper in one form or another. Across the entire country, moderate estimates suggest readership numbered over half a million people by the outbreak of the Seven Years' War.[25]

As a specific output of the press, the *London Evening Post* is demonstrative of the widespread circulation and influence of newspapers as a format. Usually printed every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening, the paper was the first to adopt a four-page, tri-weekly format, something that became a standard feature of most newspapers during the mid-eighteenth century.[26] In addition, it was also one of the few titles well established before the outbreak of hostilities in 1755, and which remained in circulation for the entirety of the Seven Years' War, enjoying significant readership throughout. Crucially, its impact on public discourse extended well beyond the capital. One of the first comprehensive studies argued that perhaps no other eighteenth century paper satisfied the demands of London and provincial audiences more effectively.[27] Echoing that sentiment, more recent studies have claimed that of all news publications from the period, the *London Evening Post* was perhaps the most successful in 'continuously linking the world of London politics to the gentry and middling society', with local publications across the country consistently re-printing and plagiarising excerpts from it.[28] Combined with the relative uniformity of its content and layout, the paper came to represent an 'established formula' that was embraced by other titles. Returning, then, to the question of how to define the news press, based on the apparent success and influence of weekly-printed newspapers such as the *London Evening Post*, focussing on that particular type of source may seem an appropriate option. The consequence of such a rationale, however, is that it potentially excludes any infrequent publications such as periodicals, monthly magazines, and most significantly, standalone pieces that may also have engaged with overseas affairs.

If newspapers are recognised as but one aspect of a much broader medium of news-related commentary, then as Bob Harris suggests the term 'press' can be expanded to include all forms of political polemic, ranging from essay papers and newspapers, to magazines, ballads, broadsides, poetry, pamphlets, and sermons. In doing so, mid-

[25] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 30-47; M. Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole,* p. 190. Harris estimates the weekly sale of newspapers in London to be in excess of 100,000, which does not take into account unstamped publications in circulation, that alone could have reached a total of 50,000 copies per week.
[26] Bob Harris, 'The London Evening Post and Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Politics', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), pp. 1132-1156.
[27] Cranfield, 'The London Evening Post, 1727-1744', pp. 20
[28] B. Harris, 'The London Evening Post', p. 1133; M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 162-164.

eighteenth century news commentary and popular culture associated with it appears far more diverse than what weekly newspapers alone can illustrate. Indeed, it has also been noted how metropolitan audiences themselves recognised that all material and commentary dealing with current affairs were components of a heterogeneous, yet interdependent 'chain of communication and propaganda.'[29] As a piece in the *Idler* observed:

> To us, who are regaled every morning and evening with intelligence, and are supplied from day to day with materials for conversation, it is difficult to conceive how man can subsist without a newspaper, or to what entertainment companies can assemble, in those wide regions of the earth that have neither Chronicles nor Magazines, neither Gazettes nor Advertisers, neither Journals nor Evening Posts.[30]

Although no single study can adequately explore the subject in its entirety, an inclusive approach to the news press is essential when considering public discourse. With that in mind, it is useful to consider some of the other formats that news commentary could take, and those that are of specific interest to this study.

Despite the increasingly popularity of newspapers throughout the eighteenth century, this does not mean that standalone publications, specifically those relating to foreign affairs, had declined in relevance by the Seven Years' War. Larger works such as pamphlets or narratives, arguably the oldest form of printed news source, continued to represent a significant component of public engagement with the overseas world, many receiving considerable exposure throughout 1754-64. An extensive list of subscribers from across northern England, for instance, prefaced a lengthy poetical essay printed in 1762 that celebrated British military success around the globe. Again, this demonstrated the reach and popularity that larger accounts enjoyed as active contributions to news commentary.[31] Rather than substituting traditional forms of press output, newspapers brought an added dimension to that exposure. The same was true for other types of commentary.

[29] B. Harris, *A Patriot Press*, p. 10.
[30] 'The Idler, No. 7', in *Universal Chronicle*, 20 May 1758, p. 57.
[31] James Ogden, *The British Lion Rous'd* (Manchester, 1762), preface.

Periodical magazines had become a prominent feature of the news press by 1750, and potentially even more significant than newspapers in terms of shaping wider public discussion relating to overseas affairs. Earlier periodicals that took the form of single essay-sheets, such as the *Craftsman, Spectator* or *Tatler* had enjoyed success throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. By the Seven Years' War, however, the larger, monthly magazine format was in ascendency.[32] This new type of publication was achieving an average monthly readership of 15,000 by 1760, easily surpassing demand for the more traditional daily or weekly periodical.[33] Due to their size and stated aim of providing excerpts from a variety of sources, magazines could also reprint earlier forms of publication in full. This absorption of material into larger collections meant essay sheets or journals could reach a far greater audience than achieved as stand-alone publications. Despite suffering from relatively low sales as a publication in its own right, for instance, the early essay-periodical *Rambler* still enjoyed a substantial readership on a national level via re-printing in popular magazines such as the *Universal Magazine*.[34] The same was true of narratives, travel accounts, sermons, and other commentary initially printed as stand-alone publications, with excerpts re-produced in local and national magazines. Take a supplement provided by the *Edinburgh Magazine* in December 1760, which sought to provide readers with a summary of the 'most remarkable events' for the preceding year, and in doing so explained its use of existing news sources:

> We shall endeavour not to dwell upon trifles, or expatiate upon the minute of articles uninteresting. A concise relation of the most substantial particulars will be sufficient for the limits of our collection, which we shall study to digest in such order, as the reader may not be embarrassed in the perusal. Meanwhile, we cannot but observe with what greediness we were wont to devour the accounts of a recent action, when the mail was fresh and the news warm from the press, though the detail was, perhaps, involved in ambiguity and contradiction. May we then hope to catch the remains of this appetite for political intelligence, by refreshing the memories of our readers in the

[32] Iona Itlaia, *The Rise of Literary Journalism in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2005), pp. 1-22.
[33] Ibid.; M. Harris, *London Newspapers,* pp. 33-48.
[34] Itlaia, *The Rise of Literary Journalism,* p. 147; Paul J. Corshin, 'Johnson's Rambler and its Audiences', in Alexander J. Butryn (ed.), *Essays on the Essay: Re-defining the Genre* (London, 1989); pp. 92-105.

> following narrative, when the occurrences of the year are wholly cleared up, and time has divested the accounts of the public transactions, of all misrepresentation.[35]

In many respects, the constant re-quoting of original sources by magazines and across the press more generally, added little new information to a public debate, an issue recognised at the time. Articles published by Tobias Smollet in the *British Magazine* and *Critical Review*, for instance, were criticised for excessive use of quotations, and for appearing to offer few additional thoughts.[36] Yet even the slightest editorial comment, printed alongside a larger reproduced piece, could shape the opinion of readers and the wider public discussion those views informed. As James Basker notes, Smollet made critical remarks sparingly, precisely to stress their importance and that of the specific quotation to which they referred.[37] The recycling of news across the medium provided audiences with information they may not otherwise have had access to and, crucially, opportunity for public discourse to evolve beyond an initial source. This sense of fluidity is a recurring theme throughout the study.

Based on the number and variety of publications produced, sold, and circulated by the 1750s, a rudimentary picture emerges of a substantial and diverse trade in news related commentary, one clearly sought after and consumed by large numbers of people.[38] Periodical magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets receive particular attention in this thesis precisely because of their conspicuous function within the machinery of news dissemination. In terms of the first two print formats, the study has focussed predominately on those publications recognised as having enjoyed a degree of prominence at the time, both as widely read and influential providers of overseas news.[39] The synergy that defined mid-eighteenth century news polemic also provides a framework for identifying those sources of a more exceptional nature, such as a standalone narrative. Pamphlets and larger works that editors considered to be of significance because of the

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[35] *Edinburgh Magazine*, Dec. 1760, p. 673.
[36] O. M. Brack, Leslie Chilton, and Walter H. Keithley (eds.), *The Miscellaneous Writings of Tobias Smollett* (London, 2016), p. 196.
[37] James Basker, *Tobias Smollet: Critic and Journalist* (Newark NJ, 1988), p. 69.
[38] For an analysis of circulation and literacy rates see D. Cressy *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge, 1980); Roger Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy in England 1750-1850', in H.J. Graff (ed.), *Literacy and Social Development in the West* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 201-213.
[39] As with this chapter, the study has looked to previous research - in particular, that of M. Harris, B. Harris, J. Black, and H. Barber - for direction as to those titles considered popular at the time or made significant contributions to news discourse.

author or content, were then promoted, quoted, as well as plagiarised by periodical titles, and vice versa. This reciprocity is an informal indicator of which sources are worth exploring in further detail and, crucially, the order to consider them. Indeed, to appreciate the fluidity of public dialogue relating to overseas violence throughout 1754-64, the study often approaches coverage afforded to a specific event in a similar way as the press at the time would have done.

Newspapers tended to be the first to print details of a foreign episode, followed by additional commentary appearing in the larger print formats. Even on occasions where a standalone publication may have been the first to address a particular issue, newspapers like the *Public Advertiser* still typically advertised those accounts in advance. Reports printed specifically in newspapers, therefore, can act as an entry point for a wider analysis of public discourse relating to a particular episode. Chapter three, for instance, considers the British defeat at Monongahela by looking first at the initial responses that appeared in newspapers, thereafter moving to editorial pieces, which subsequently appeared in the monthly magazines. Chapter five takes a similar approach with its exploration of the Black Hole of Calcutta, exploring preliminary newspaper coverage, before addressing the larger accounts that later engaged with the episode. This approach is not a hard-fast rule, and there are many instances where monthly periodicals alone receive the majority of attention, in large part due to the space they could dedicate to reporting and analysing individual events. Where possible, however, the study has sought to demonstrate the evolving nature of public engagement, highlighting changes in the tone and content of press coverage relating to specific circumstances, as exposure shifted from eyewitness accounts printed in newspapers to more expanded commentary that other formats allowed for.

This thesis is not an analysis of intra-press dynamics, focussing primarily on the themes and arguments expressed by news polemic rather than which publications or authors articulated those discussions - particularly as the identity of many authors during this period is difficult to ascertain. Yet as competing political or socio-economic interests also played a role in shaping public discourse, to take that influence into account the study does consider a wide range of sources. For instance, two periodical magazines that feature heavily are the *London Magazine* and *Gentleman's Magazine*, chosen in part because of their perceived status as sources for critical news analysis. Each publication was comparable in terms of layout, readership, general content, intended audience, and

material used for individual articles. Despite those similarities, each magazine was loosely backed by, or rather appealed to rival political factions; the *Gentleman's Magazine* associated with Tory and other opposition elements within parliament, the *London Magazine* generally supportive of the Pelham-Newcastle ministries. The same was true of many other competing publications from the period; the Tory-leaning *Critical Review* can be juxtaposed with the more established and pro-government *Monthly Review,* led by Ralph Griffiths.[40] Although the political affiliations of the press during the Seven Years' War were not as defined as during other periods of the eighteenth century - an issue explored later in this chapter - even subtle allegiances could still exert a degree of influence on the perspectives taken by individual editors. This study uses a range of sources to highlight these motivations as well as other reasons why commentators might have chosen to greet reports of overseas violence differently. When considered together, however, these different views also represented a fluid and often critical public discourse relating to British involvement on the world stage.

Typically afforded prominent space, regardless of publication format, foreign affairs received an 'excessive' degree of coverage by the mid-eighteenth century news press.[41] As previous studies show, the stated intentions of many news editors give an indication of the primacy with which international reports were treated.[42] The *Daily Journal*, for instance, boasted of being 'sure of receiving the best advices both foreign and domestic', with the *London Chronicle* similarly declaring how 'the first demand made by the reader of a journal is, that he should find an accurate account of foreign transactions'.[43] A header for *Lloyd's Evening Post* went even further, proudly explaining that most publications were unable to include overseas sources in their morning editions because foreign mail typically arrived in the afternoon. As an evening publication, however, dedicated to 'intelligence', the *Post* could translate and publish all foreign information 'on the very day it arrives, and may, within a few hours after it enters the kingdom, be distributed by post to all the most considerable parts of it'.[44] The ability to provide up to date foreign affairs was clearly a major selling point for any self-respecting news title, however, this does not mean domestic reports were an insignificant component.

[40] An editorial to a later work by Tobias Smollet provides a good overview of his political sympathies and that of his competitors, Tobias Smollet, *The History and Adventures of an Atom,* Introduction and Notes by Robert Adams Day (Athens, Georgia, 2014), pp. xxvi-xxxviii.
[41] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 166-169.
[42] Black, *The English Press* pp. 197-238.
[43] *London Chronicle*, 1 Jan. 1757; *Daily Journal*, 24 Jan. 1721.
[44] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 22 Jul. 1757.

A recent study of newspaper indexes by Uriel Heyd, suggests that 50-60% of reports printed by certain news titles related specifically to domestic occurrences rather than foreign intelligence, which ranged anywhere between 17-37% by comparison.[45] This might imply foreign news was far less significant than domestic, yet Heyd concedes that quantitative studies of newspaper content can be problematic. Indexed summaries and the assigned classifications often do not adequately reflect the themes expressed by the original news article. The sample range of indexes can also have a dramatic impact on the outcome. Heyd based his own research, for instance, on two sets of newspaper indexes for the *London Chronicle* and *Lloyds Evening Post*, but used only a single year from each decade of the eighteenth century for the sample. For the decade 1750-1759, Heyd considered focussed on 1758 as that year contained the most complete set of indexes for that particular decade. Yet as this thesis is concerned with the period 1754-1764, there are specific years within that timeframe where overseas affairs received significant exposure that an index from 1758 alone would not reflect. Regardless, however, what space individual publications dedicated to reporting a specific type of news, existing studies do show that foreign affairs consistently received precedence over domestic concerns.[46] Understanding the broader influences behind those editorial trends as well as the culture of press engagement, more generally, is crucial for exploring public discourse generated throughout the Seven Years' War.

One of the main factors that determined how the press covered overseas affairs was the process by which foreign intelligence became news in the first place. As noted already, the main resource for international news, and news in general, was other news publications. On occasion, editors or authors might acknowledge when certain accounts were not original sources, yet for the most part plagiarism was endemic across the medium.[47] The near ubiquitous duplication of material had previously led to complaints from the *Daily Journal*, which remarked how:

> No one has taken care to be better informed than his neighbour news-monger. They have built a superstructure upon a scanty foundation, and therefore we not only find the same news penned by different authors, but often the very same story, and

[45] Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, pp. 109-154.
[46] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 166-169.
[47] Ibid., pp. 158-163; Black, *The English Press*, pp. 87.

> almost verbatim, in one individual paper, in the several articles perhaps of Paris, Naples, Hamburg, Dresden and Rome; so that the poor reader, like young Mirabel in the play, must take up with soup for breakfast, soup for dinner, soup for supper, and soup for breakfast again.[48]

Similar observations appeared in the *Universal Chronicle*, a piece from 1758 complaining how news titles:

> Are daily multiplied without increase of knowledge. The tale of the morning paper is told again in the evening, and the narratives of the evening are bought again in the morning. These repetitions, indeed, waste time, but they do not shorten it. The most eager peruser of news is tired before he has completed his labour; and many a man, who enters the coffee-house in his nightgown and slippers, is called away to his shop, or his dinner, before he has well considered the state of Europe.[49]

The principles of copyright in the mid-eighteenth century were still vague and reproduction across publications went largely unchallenged. Yet the provision of news was also a common endeavour - the recycling of material was an accepted feature of print culture and considered necessary for the press to operate. Individual publications were both disseminators of, and reserves for information, creating news whilst simultaneously providing a resource that other commentators could draw upon.

In terms of original material, the main source of news relating to overseas affairs was 'ship news', the exchange of military dispatches, diplomatic correspondence, and private accounts that went through British ports.[50] Coffee houses, for instance, proved an ideal location for commentators to frequent, the steady traffic of merchants and investors providing a ready source of gossip and rumour. Publishers also relied heavily on accounts from continental newspapers and, increasingly, on material produced in the North American colonies. A collection of correspondence between Lord Holdernesse and the British Consul at Ostend Michael Hatton, gives an indication of this exchange in news

[48] *Daily Journal*, 24 Jan. 1721, quoted in Black, *The English Press* p. 90, pp. 86-96.
[49] 'The Idler, No. 7', in *Universal Chronicle*, 20 May 1758, p. 57.
[50] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 155-157.

sources between the continent and Britain, including as it does various French newspapers and pamphlets acquired by Holdernesse to keep appraised of European affairs.[51] British news titles also frequently imported excerpts from foreign titles and translated them for domestic consumption. Indeed, many prided themselves on a professed ability to provide accurate, up-to-date, and geographically diverse news; audiences might lose interest in titles that relied solely on 'stale', second-hand information from English sources alone.[52] As a memorandum from 1756 stated, the *London Gazette* was in repute:

> And will always continue till it is better supplied with fresh and authentic news. If such accounts as come in were now and then thrown in the Form of articles from Whitehall, and the common News Papers effectively prevented from making them, either in whole or in part, it would soon raise the reputation of the Gazette for nothing will do it so effectively as a better supply of news and the keeping it to itself. [53]

Finally, the sharing of parliamentary intelligence by members of the governing classes further increased the variety and availability of material relating to overseas affairs.[54] Together, the various channels through which the acquisition, re-production, and distribution of foreign news was achieved represented a 'symbiotic' network of like-minded political, social and business contacts.[55] The porous nature of that communication process, however, is also a reflection of the various impetuses that could shape how, what, and why certain information appeared in print. This study separates those influences into two broad categories - those defined by individual agency, and those driven by the wider socio-political culture in which the press operated. The remainder of this chapter will now consider each of these areas in more detail.

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[51] Letters to Lord Holdernesse from Michael Hatton, Consul at Ostend, mostly relating to French affairs and enclosing a number of intelligence reports; 1752-1759 (mostly of the years 1755, 1756), Leeds Papers, Egerton MS 3465, British Library.
[52] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 158-163.
[53] *Newspapers Great Britain and Ireland: Memorandum rel. to the 'London Gazette': 1756*, Egerton MS 3437, British Library.
[54] B. Harris, *A Patriot Press*, pp. 35-47.
[55] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, p. 160.

The Reporting of Overseas News: Personal Motivation

The concept of 'paper warfare', and the idea that news print provided a means for groups from across the socio-economic spectrum - political, commercial, theological, intellectual - to promote their own position and challenge that of others, was integral to the mid-eighteenth century press.[56] The direct input and agency of individual parties, as continues to be the case today, was fundamental in determining the appearance, tone, and content of news commentary relating to overseas affairs. Take the close relationship between the governing classes and news publishers. The ability to manage foreign affairs, and then capitalise on how those circumstances played to a wider audience at home, had long been a feature of the British political landscape. The emergence of an established print culture in the seventeenth century, however, added a new sense of scope and potential to that process. Thereafter, from the Augustan through to the Post-Pelham era, those in Parliament and at Court, cultivated partnerships with the news trade, the emerging idea of a 'free press' providing a direct link between Westminster and an increasingly influential middling class.[57] Although the chief focus here is not the parties involved in those associations, rather the themes expressed as a consequence, it is still important to recognise their role in shaping what made it into print and why.

Even a cursory examination of parliamentary struggles throughout the period reveals numerous instances of partisan engagement with the news press, and concerted attempts to direct the public flow of information. In his efforts to become Northern Secretary in the early 1700s, for instance, Robert Harley established a significant network of contacts across the trade.[58] Robert Walpole, similarly, provided considerable financial support to titles such as the *London Journal*, *Daily Gazetteer*, and *Free Briton*, whose writers were encouraged to take a more favourable stance towards the government.[59] Such behaviour continued through to the Seven Years' War, the Duke of Newcastle contributed over £4000 towards the pensions of pamphleteers and other news commentators, while his successor the Earl of Bute bestowed similar patronage on figures such as Tobias Smollet.[60] Many earlier studies, however, have potentially exaggerated this image of a servile news press. The

[56] Keymer, 'Paper Wars', pp. 128-132.
[57] B. Harris, *A Patriot Press,* p. 254; M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 113-134; Peters, *Pitt and Popularity: The Patriot Minister and London Opinion during the Seven Years' War* (Oxford, 1980)*,* pp. 19-24.
[58] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, p. 113. See also Alan Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press* (Cambridge, 1979).
[59] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 81-84.
[60] Ibid.; John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Ascension of George III* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 223.

reality was more complex, with excessive attention afforded to specific instances of press collusion driven, in part, by the scholarly emphasis afforded to political correspondence and their inevitable 'high level' focus on inter-personal rivalries.[61] Furthermore, the relationship between politicians and the press was not always free of acrimony.

Despite the broad consensus as to the perceived benefits and need for press liberty, various attempts were made to assert control over press output, including the Stamp Act of 1712, the Stage Licensing Act of 1737, and other, more subtle methods for discouraging or suppressing circulation.[62] Conversely, when those in Government did set themselves against elements of the press, that antagonism could be just as important in shaping news content as instances where more a congenial state of affairs existed. Attempts by Walpole to prosecute *The Craftsman* in 1731 had the effect of boosting its popularity amongst audiences, further shaping the adversarial tone and the oppositional nature of its reporting.[63] A similar dynamic defined works produced by Tory-leaning commentators during the early stages of the Seven Years' War, their opposition to the Duke of Newcastle often adding a sense of urgency to their criticisms of his perceived mismanagement. A poor relationship between individuals in power and those within the press could be as influential as a good one, political agency was a central feature underpinning any given affiliation, or lack of, as well as the news produced in consequence. The same was true of individual mercantile interests.

Britain, by its very nature as a trading nation and centre of an extensive web of overseas possessions, unsurprisingly afforded considerable attention to events that occurred beyond its own shores. The first half of the century witnessed the development of complex, economic relationships between overseas traders and an emerging consumer class, both of whom had become increasingly reliant on the continued success of British commercial interests abroad.[64] Whether it was sugar from the Caribbean plantations, spices and textiles provided by the East India Company, or tobacco, timber, and furs imported from North America, the British overseas world represented an interconnected

[61] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 81; Black *The English Press*, pp. 137-139.
[62] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, ch. 8; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 65-67; Jeremy Black, 'George II and the Juries Act: Royal Concern about the Control of the Press', *Institute of Historical Research*, 61 (1988), pp. 359-362.
[63] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 76.
[64] Kathleen Wilson, "'Empire of Virtue": The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture, c.1720-1785', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 128-164; Harris 'American Idols', p. 112; Black, *The English Press*, p. 200.

web of economic assets, which commercial operators were keen to protect, promote, and expand. The news press provided an opportunity for mercantile interests to raise both their own profile, but also those regions and markets on which their business depended. Crucially, commercial influences would have significant impact on the reporting of overseas affairs, more generally.

In the decades leading up to the Seven Years' War, strategic economic interests were frequently presented as not only essential to a few wealthy investors, but indispensable for maintaining the prosperity of Britain as a whole. One pamphlet published earlier in the century, for instance, emphasised the severe implications that ordinary Britons would face if British trade in the West Indies did not receive adequate support:

> It will constrain those planters to leave Making Sugar, to forsake the plantations, as having no employment there (…), which will be a total loss of that trade to this kingdom and be the ruin of many thousand English families, who in England and the plantations subsisted by that Trade.[65]

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1755, concerns that war could have a detrimental effect on British commerce led to similar remarks about British interests in North America:

> These colonies are of such consequence to the trade, wealth and naval power of Great Britain, and will in future time make so larger additions to it, that (…) should she once lose them, and the French gain them, Great Britain herself must necessarily be reduced to an absolute subjection to the French Crown.[66]

The same message was expressed in a letter from a Virginian merchant, printed by the *London Magazine*, which declared that 'on the security and prosperity of the colonies depends the present flourishing condition of the mother country (...) In short Great Britain is chiefly indebted to us that she makes so rich, so potent and respectable a figure in Europe.'[67] Often printed in large numbers during periods of heightened international

[65] Anon, *The Case of His Majesties Sugar Plantations* (London, 1701), p. 4. Similar examples include Fayrer Hall, *The importance of the British plantations in America to this Kingdom* (London, 1731); Samuel Dicker, *A letter to a Member of Parliament* (London, 1745).
[66] William Clarke, *Observations on the Late and Present Conduct of the French* (London, 1755), p. 41.
[67] *London Magazine*, Aug. 1754, pp. 371-372.

tension, these commercial interventions were crucial in determining the exposure afforded to overseas affairs, but also the context through which to consider them. The governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, was responsible for amplifying much of the anti-French rhetoric expressed during the early 1750s, in the hope that military conflict would benefit his own business interests in the Ohio Valley.[68] Indeed, a pamphlet by John Ogelthorpe MP outlined a belief that clamour for war in 1755 was driven, in part, by merchant manufacturers and financiers, 'the stock-jobbers, usurers, and Jews certainly will cry out for the honour of England, for they wish us grinning honour that the interest of money may rise'.[69] Strategic commercial interests thus remained a central feature of press coverage throughout the Seven Years' War, and were responsible for much of its appearance in the first place. Crucially, however, those involved in the news trade were also independent players within that print landscape, whose coverage of foreign affairs was the product of a consumer-driven marketplace and recognition that as 'brokers of information', they - the producers of news - were active participants in shaping public dialogue.[70]

Considered first from a sales perspective, reporting overseas news made commercial sense. The wholesale expansion of news publications throughout the early-eighteenth century meant any competitive title needed a sufficient quantity of captivating material to remain of interest to readers.[71] In addition to other subjects of interest such as violent crime, printers and commentators instinctively turned to overseas affairs as a plentiful and lucrative source of material, one that could easily meet the growing literary demands placed on publishers. The succinctness of many accounts, for instance, meant printers could dedicate significant quantities of page space to a multitude of separate issues. Coupled with the sheer number and increasingly regularity of titles in circulation by the 1750s, the prominence afforded to overseas affairs was, in effect, self-replicating - as foreign news achieved greater coverage, so public demand grew as a result. The rapid escalation of British military involvement in North America and India from 1755 onwards only helped to amplify this effect, the scale of the hostilities that followed representing a fresh opportunity for news titles. Printed in 1755, the *Naked Truth* criticised the financial motivations underpinning press obsession with military conflict 'next to political sedition

[68] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* (London, 2001). See for instance Anon, *French Policy Defeated* (London, 1755); Archibald Kennedy, *Serious Considerations on the Present State of the Affairs of the Northern Colonies* (New York, 1754).
[69] James Edward Oglethorpe, *The Naked Truth* (London, 1755), pp. 9-13.
[70] Gardner, *The Business of News*, pp. 11-19.
[71] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 69-70.

and private scandal it is the mart for their Wares'.[72] Similar reservations were expressed in the *Idler*, which argued that 'a peace will equally leave the warrior and relater of wars destitute of employment; and I know not whether more is to be dreaded from streets filled with soldiers accustomed to plunder, or from garrets filled with scribblers accustomed to lie'.[73] Another essay printed in the *St. James's Chronicle* by the dramatist George Colman, made the same observation:

> A battle in Germany, a fort stormed in the West Indies, or a Nabob created in the East, is worth forty shillings to every paper, that reprints the particulars (...) how great then must be the dread of the consequences of peace to the proprietors of the swarm of Advertisers, Gazetteers, Ledgers, Journals and Chronicles, and Evening Posts? A peace, which will lie heavier on their papers than the double duty on stamps.[74]

Overseas hostilities made interesting news. In terms of generating the abundance of material needed for publications to survive in a competitive climate, the global nature of the Seven Years' War provided an alluring backdrop of dangerous frontiers, a cast of exotic combatants, and violent reversals in military fortune.[75] It was not the first time Britons living overseas had experienced this type of conflict, or the violent aspects often associated with it, but by means of a trans-Atlantic literary community it became the first occasion where Britons at home came to face-to-face with these issues in such graphic and extensive detail. As Tim Fulford argues, if the non-European world was not a pressing issue in British consciousness before 1756, the Seven Years' War would change that.[76] Yet it was also thanks to the press as a perceived 'intermediary' in communicating that news, and as an

[72] Oglethorpe, *The Naked Truth*, p. 13.
[73] 'The Idler, No. 31', in *Universal Chronicle*, 4 Nov. 1758, p. 249.
[74] *St. James's Chronicle*, 11 Jul. 1761; Black, *The English Press*, p. 288.
[75] Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 194; Peter E. Russell, 'Redcoats in the Wilderness: British Officers and Irregular Warfare in Europe and America, 1740 to 1760', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (1978); pp. 629-652; Peter Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War' in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999), pp. 127-128.
[76] Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature and Transatlantic Culture 1756-1830* (Oxford, 2006), p. 51.

active stakeholder in promoting and perpetuating interest in those circumstances, which helped to drive the broader emphasis placed upon overseas affairs from 1754-1764.[77]

The various parties involved in the process of news dissemination, who competed and cooperated with each other as part of a broader print culture, possessed their own convictions and agenda beyond concerns simply over profitability. Gardner notes, for instance, that in much the same way politicians used the press for their own means, so too must the owners of news titles, editors, shareholders, and individual commentators all be considered as 'mediators' in a system of information exchange.[78] Publications like the *Craftsman*, for instance, not only reported news but sought to be an active player in shaping it - their opposition to the Walpole Ministry, and corruption associated with it, being an explicit aim of the paper:

> The mystery of State-Craft abounds with such innumerable frauds, prostitutions, and enormities, in all shapes, and under all disguises, that it is an inexhaustible fund, an eternal resource for satire and reprehension; since from this grand fountain of corruption flow all those little streams and rivulets, which have spread themselves through every part of this kingdom, and debauched all ranks and orders of men: it shall therefore be my chief business to unravel the dark secrets of political Craft, and trace it through all its various windings and intricate recesses.[79]

The same was also true of later publications from the Seven Years' War period, the *London Evening Post* being one of many opposition papers to have openly criticised the Newcastle Government for its predisposition towards protecting Hanoverian interests on the continent.[80] Indeed, the shareholders behind individual publications often played as important a role in deciding editorial policy and the content as the printers themselves.[81] In an attempt to shift public opinion, for instance, pro-Jacobite financiers continued to support publications that championed the Stuart cause, even after the failure of 1745 - the

[77] Gardner, *The Business of News*, p. 11.
[78] Ibid., p. 16.
[79] Thomas Lockwood. 'Did Fielding Write for The Craftsman?' *Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), pp. 86-117; Simon Varey, 'The Craftsman' *Prose Studies,* 16 (1993), pp. 58-77.
[80] Cranfield, 'The 'London Evening Post', pp. 20-37.
[81] M. Harris, London Newspapers, p. 77.

True Briton and *National Journal* being two notable examples.[82] Able to supplement, even challenge the information they received and reported, all those involved in the creation of newsprint exerted varying degrees of influence in shaping the overall tone of news polemic.

Individual contributors were also keen to ensure their own observations made it into print, rather than simply reporting events. The 'Wilkes episode', for example, is a good illustration of an individual news commentator using the platform provided by a serial publication to advocate their own political viewpoint - *North Briton*, *No. 45,* produced by John Wilkes, openly challenged the Treaty of Paris and the controversial decision to return many of the territories Britain had acquired during the Seven Years' War.[83] Wilkes, of course, was but one of many in the press who actively sought to shape opinion relating to foreign affairs. Indeed, the *North Briton* was a riposte to views expressed in the rival *Briton* periodical and *Critical Review*, both edited by Tobias Smollet.[84] As Edmund Burke, editor of the *Annual Register* at that time wrote:

> During the summer, the light troops of party, the pamphleteers and news writers, kept skirmishing with great alacrity, in verse and prose. The libellous spirit, which animated those productions was raised to the highest pitch of audacity and insolence. Character no longer depended upon the tenor of a man's life and actions; it was entirely determined by the party he had taken. Neither innocence nor dignity were a protection.[85]

Standalone publications were no different. Pamphlets and larger accounts that might appear to have engaged with overseas issues simply because of their commercial viability as subjects of interest, also demonstrate the opportunity offered to individual authors for affecting broader political or popular sentiment. One account printed early in the Seven Years' War sought to benefit from increasing public interest with the East Indies theatre, yet the opening dedication also indicated how the author was addressing the issue because of his own personal feelings concerning the British war effort:

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[82] James J. Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1993) p. 53; B. Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, pp. 39-41.
[83] Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 72;
[84] Robin Fabel, 'The Patriotic Briton: Tobias Smollett and English Politics, 1756-1771', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8 (1974), pp. 100-114.
[85] *Annual Register of the Year 1764* (London, 1765), p. 18.

> Could the nation have ever sunk to the degree we see it sunk, in every point of merit literary, military, or social, if the cause of this decay had not taken birth amongst those, of whom the rank and fortune establish the contagious influence, give the lead, and set the fashion of worthlessness, with so high a hand? [86]

The preface to another publication by James Ogden was similar, in that although clearly seeking to benefit from increasing popular engagement with the conflict, it also showed the author's own enthusiastic interest in those hostilities:

> To point out those successes, to set that firmness intrepidity, and patriotism, in an advantageous light, was the authors design; executed perhaps, in too much haste: But his friends were impatient for the publication, and he could not resist the pleasure of celebrating, tho' imperfectly, the achievements of his countrymen.[87]

That said, care should be taken not to exaggerate the nature of press interventions during the Seven Years War', or to conflate the radicalism of later decades with specific instances of outspoken commentary produced in the 1750s.[88] As Black notes, 'by concentrating on crises in which public manifestations of opposition to the government were notable, it is possible to present a misleading view of the difficulties that ministries encountered.'[89] Those involved in press output, financiers through to individual writers, were not averse to commenting on overseas affairs, but those contributions were sporadic, driven by the unpredictable events of the Seven Years' War itself, and the personality-led factionalism that characterised Westminster politics.

Ranging, then, from politicians to mercantile interests, to the economic or personal impetus of printers and publishers themselves, individual agency was undoubtedly a central feature of any decision to report overseas affairs and explanation of why foreign news enjoyed such prominence across the medium. Yet moving away from the importance and influence of specific actors, the other key component in shaping the nature and perceived

[86] John-Henry Grose, *A Voyage to the East-Indies* (London, 1757), p. iv.
[87] Ogden, *The British Lion Rous'd*, preface.
[88] B. Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, p. 33, pp. 49-55; M. Harris, London Newspapers, p. 99.
[89] Jeremy Black, 'The Press and Politics in the Eighteenth Century', *Media History*, 8 (2002), p 112.

significance of news coverage during the Seven Years' War, was the broader culture within which the press both operated and reinforced.

The Reporting of Overseas News: Popular Sentiment

In many respects, popular attitudes in mid-eighteenth century Britain were of greater relevance in determining the content, tone, and appearance of overseas news coverage, than decisions taken by any one individual or group. Press exposure afforded to foreign affairs rested on a series of interconnected themes that revolved around an image of the nation-at-large, its relationship with the wider world, and expectation that an out-of-door political class – as enlightened, patriotic stakeholders in that society – would want to remain informed of events and issues relating to it. Coverage of overseas news, in a sense, was an expression of wider popular interests and anxiety, as well as a perceived means of addressing those same issues.

The importance of overseas commerce is perhaps the most prominent of influences that helped to shape, stimulate, and provide context to the reporting of foreign affairs. This chapter has already shown how the press allowed individual mercantile interests to promote their own specific economic agendas, yet it was also a response to 'blue-water' ideals more generally. Though constrained by external factors - time, distance, bad weather - an established news trade provided merchants and investors with relatively consistent and accurate updates on the condition of their overseas interests. Referred to as 'commercial speculation', ongoing public concern for economic interests became a driving force behind the inclusion and tone of foreign news, but also the disproportionate amount of emphasis afforded to it.[90] Much of the travel literature produced throughout the period also reflects this mercantile discourse. Josiah Tucker's *Instructions for Travellers*, for instance, illustrates how Britons abroad were encouraged to collect information on the 'trading potential' of the foreign lands they visited.[91] Others have observed how the literature of Daniel Defoe often promoted the perceived economic benefits of colonial expansion.[92] Clare Brant re-iterates this point, stating that travel accounts and commercial news 'went hand in glove', the relationship helping to encourage the flow of goods, labour, and wealth to the benefit of

[90] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 166-169.
[91] Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 49; Josiah Tucker, *Instructions for Travellers*, (Dublin, 1757).
[92] J. A. Downie, 'Defoe, Imperialism, and the Travel Books Reconsidered', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 13 (1983), pp. 66-83. See Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce* (London, 1728).

British interests.[93] This fits in with the 'classic vision' of empire - maritime, commercial, and Protestant - themes that continued to exert considerable influence on news commentary produced throughout the Seven Years' War.[94] Yet providing a service for, and responding to mercantile culture, is only one aspect of press interest with the overseas world.

Coverage of foreign affairs was as much a response to security concerns as an expression of mercantile impetus. Coupled with an emerging sense of 'British' national identity, the threats posed by rival powers was fundamental in driving the production of news relating to overseas affairs. Ensuring the protection of the sugar islands, for instance, was of paramount concern throughout the period and recognised as essential for maintaining British power on the European stage. As early as 1708, John Oldmixon had stressed the importance of British interests in the Caribbean, but largely in terms of breaking free from a reliance on imports from rival European powers, a sentiment frequently reiterated as competition to control the lucrative sugar trade intensified.[95] British expeditions against Spanish colonies in the 1740s generated similar coverage, framed through a lens of intra-European geo-political rivalry.[96] This was also true of most accounts relating to Anglo-French disputes in North America throughout the same period; if the colonies did appear in newsprint, it was mainly as part of a broader analysis of the Atlantic commercial-nexus and its benefit to Britain.[97] Overseas expansion, in this sense, often represented a means to an end rather than outright aim.

Increasing recognition of the sheer scale of the world beyond British shores is one reason for Eurocentric frames of reference. An author in the 1730s, for instance, remarked that 'whoever will cast an eye on the map of New England may, at first glance, perceive that Great Britain, compared to it, is but a mole hill'.[98] Another publication attempted to provide an accurate description of Canada, but admitted from the outset that 'as the

[93] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth Century Letters and British Culture* (New York, 2006), p. 243.
[94] Karen O' Brien, 'Benevolence in the Case of the British Empire 1680-1800', in David Armitage (ed.), *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 170-171.
[95] John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America* (London, 1708), p. 23. See also Anon, *Considerations on the Bill now Depending in Parliament Concerning the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1731).
[96] Doohwan Ahn and Brendan Simms, 'European Great Power Politics in British Public Discourse, 1714-1763', in William Mulligan and Brendan Simms (eds.), *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660–2000: How Strategic Concerns Shaped Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 87; Marie Peters, 'Early Hanoverian Consciousness: Empire or Europe?', *English Historical Review*, 122 (2007), p. 647.
[97] Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2003), pp. 153-154. Examples of fiscal-orientated studies of the colonies include Anon, *The Case of the British Northern Colonies* (London, 1731); Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain* (London, 1730); Fayer Hall, *The Importance of the British Plantations in America to this Kingdom* (London, 1731).
[98] Anon, *A Comparison between the British Sugar Colonies and New England* (London, 1732), p. 4.

bounds of this country are not adjusted it is impossible to give the reader a clear idea of its extent and limits.'[99] Yet the day-to-day details of Britons operating or living overseas, prior to the Seven Years' War, existed for the most part as self-contained episodes, attracting little interest from British audiences at home. Indeed, as Peters highlights in her study of the pre-1750 news-periodical scene, aside from the consistent attention given to economic concerns, public interest with overseas affairs was characterised by 'fragmentary heterogeneity'.[100] The sporadic coverage afforded to earlier conflicts in North America, for instance, is an illustration of this indifference. Even the fall of Louisbourg in 1745 - an event that did attract significant exposure - was largely situated in conventional parameters, with overwhelming emphasis given to the improved position it gave Britain in Europe as opposed to interest in the event for its own sake.[101] Geo-political concerns, specifically European power politics, remained central.

Public fixation with the strength of the British state is reflected in the bellicosity underpinning coverage of foreign affairs, as well as the professed ideals that any self-respecting Briton was expected to embody. Analysis of any news publication from the period illustrates the priority and status afforded to European hostilities, as events that could have profound, geo-political consequences - accounts of troop deployments, battles, and diplomatic negotiations filling the pages of most newspapers.[102] The detail and enthusiasm of military reporting, however, also reflected a desire to see Britain standing firm in the face of foreign aggression. The jubilant response to the victories of Admiral Vernon, for instance, represented a popular appetite to associate perceived civic virtue and battlefield tenacity with the nation-at-large.[103] Conversely, the same was also true for those deemed to have failed in their responsibilities, as occurred with the trial and execution of Admiral Byng in 1757. Later chapters explore in more detail how news of the calamitous defeat at Monongahela in 1755, and horrific accounts of Indian raids committed against the English back-settlements, were presented as reflections, or rather lamentations on the health of the British nation. Exposure afforded to overseas affairs, and military affairs in particular, was an evaluation of British military prowess as much an attempt to report a

[99] *The Magazine of Magazines*, Nov. 1750, pp. 397-399.
[100] Peters, 'Early Hanoverian Consciousness', p. 642. See also Colley, *Captives,* p. 160.
[101] See *London Evening Post*, 23 Jul. 1745; *Daily Gazetteer*, 22 Jul. 1745; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1745, pp. 649-650;
[102] M. Harris, *London Newspapers*, pp. 166-169; B. Harris 'American Idols', pp. 114; B. Harris, Politics and the Nation, p. 7.
[103] Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon' *Past & Present*, 121 (1988), pp. 74-109.

specific news event.[104] In terms, therefore, of broader influences that shaped press coverage during the Seven Years' War, it is clear that news commentators had long approached non-European affairs with an outlook that placed the wellbeing and security of the British state forefront. Still, economic or geo-political motivations alone cannot explain the extensive exposure afforded to foreign news. Though associated with commercial and strategic priorities, widespread fascination with exotic travel acted as a parallel motivation.

Public engagement with overseas affairs did not begin with the Seven Years' War, in the preceding decades a surge in oceanic commerce, exploration, and colonial settlement created what Catherine Armstrong calls an atmosphere of 'possibility and potential'.[105] Favoured by an emerging middling class, a growing body of literature documenting or imagining the experience of those who ventured overseas became a widely accessible and increasingly popular genre.[106] The emergence of the novel, for instance, was in large part thanks to this newfound interest in the wider world, Defoe and Swift being the two most recognised authors to embrace the genre.[107] Travel 'became the vogue', and news commentary printed throughout the Seven Years' War would inevitably feed into and benefit from that public appetite.[108] Drawing on principles outlined by Edmund Burke and his influential study of the 'Sublime', travel narratives safely introduced audiences to the world beyond English shores, while still providing the 'vicarious thrill' of learning about the dangers their compatriots had encountered.[109] As Burke himself stated, 'when danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications they may be, and they are delightful'.[110] Other prominent figures from the period expressed similar opinions. Adam Smith referred to the 'sympathetic passion of the spectator', the idea that observing

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[104] David Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press'' in Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors and Clyve Jones (eds.), *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 73.

[105] Catherine Armstrong, *Writing North America in the Seventeenth Century: English Representations in Print and Manuscript* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 4-9; William H. Sherman, 'Stirrings and Searchings: 1550-1720', in Peter Hulme and Tim Young (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 25, pp. 17-33.

[106] Armstrong, *Writing North America,* pp. 4-9; Roy Bridges, 'Exploration and Travel Outside of Europe: 1720-1914, in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge, 2002), ch. 3. See for instance A. and J. Churchill, *A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels* (London, 1747); George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World* (London, 1748).

[107] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London, 1719); Defoe, *The Life, Adventures and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton* (London, 1720); Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (London, 1726).

[108] Tim Fulford, 'Introduction', in Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (eds.), *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the Era of Imperial Expansion 1770-1835*, vol. 1 (London, 2001), p. xiii.

[109] Peter Kitson (ed.), *Travels, Explorations and Empires: Writings from the era of Imperial Expansion 1770-1835,* vol. 3 (London, 2001), p. viii; Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp. 79-85.

[110] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1757), p. 13.

or learning about an experience will lead to emotions that are 'perfect coincidence between the sympathetic passion in himself, and the original passion in the person principally concerned'.[111] Crucially, these apparent insights into human behaviour were not restricted to intellectual discussions, but recognised as demonstrable features of press engagement with foreign affairs. As a piece in the *Idler* remarked, 'one part of mankind is naturally curious to know the sentiments, manners, and condition of the rest (...) this general desire easily procures readers to every book from which it can expect gratification'.[112] Yet of all the themes travel literature explored and sought to benefit from, the issue of extreme violence is one of the most prominent.

Captivity narratives provide an illustration of the close relationship between violence and popular fascination with non-European travel. Publishers instinctively capitalised on what has been called the 'public's love of the lurid', with Linda Colley, in particular, arguing that captivity stories 'lingered on the pornography of real or invented violence, in part because such lurid passages attracted readers even as they allowed them to feel properly repelled'.[113] Printed throughout the Seven Years' War, these narratives recounted in gratuitous detail gruesome acts of physical torture and suffering. Amerindian captivity accounts were among the most popular. In May 1758, excerpts from a piece by Robert Eastburn appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *Newcastle General Magazine.* They reported how a party of Indians had ambushed Eastburn and his companions on the frontier, before stripping and forcing them to wade naked through deep snow back to Canada. Any prisoner who fell from exhaustion was killed instantly, something Eastburn himself was constantly reminded of having been 'appointed to march behind an Indian, who had a large bunion of green scalps hanging at his back, which was increased as often as some straggling wretch was overtaken, whose scalp was immediately added to the rest.'[114] The account was by no means unique, with vivid details of this sort becoming a staple of the genre.

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[111] Richard Bourke, 'Edmund Burke and Enlightenment Sociability: Justice, Honour and the Principles of Government', *History of Political Thought*, 21 (2000), pp. 642-643; Kenneth A. B. MacKinnon, 'Adam Smith on Delictual Liability', in Robin P. Malloy and Jerry Evensky (eds.), *Adam Smith and the Philosophy of Law and Economics* (New York, 1995), pp. 82-113.

[112] 'The Idler, No. 98', in *Universal Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1760, p. 57.

[113] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', p. 74; Colley, *Captives*, p. 177; John Richardson, 'Atrocity in Mid Eighteenth-Century War Literature', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33 (2009), pp. 92-114.

[114] *Gentleman's Magazine,* May 1758, pp. 218-221; *Newcastle General Magazine*, May 1758, pp. 241-245. See also Robert Eastburn, *A Faithful Narrative of the Dangers, Sufferings and Deliverances of Robert Eastburn* (Philadelphia, 1758).

Originally printed in 1757, the astonishing tale of Peter Williamson would be one of the most popular and widely circulated of eighteenth century captivity narratives.[115] Again, this account provided grotesque details of alleged suffering at the hands of Delaware Indians. Recounting the fate of a fellow prisoner, the author recalled how:

> His arms were tied close to his body, and a hole being dug, deep enough for him to stand upright, he was put there-in and earth rammed all round his body up to his neck, so that his head only appeared above ground; they then scalped him, and there let him remain for three or four hours, in the greatest agonies; after which they made a small fire near his head, causing him to suffer the most excruciating torments imaginable (...) his eyes gushed out of their sockets and such agonizing torments did the unhappy creature suffer for near two hours.[116]

The recurring emphasis given to the alleged cruelty and bloodlust of the Indians is further indication of the popular appetite that existed for tales of hostile interactions between ordinary Britons and exotic, dangerous 'others'. Even those who printed and distributed such reports readily acknowledged the fascination they generated. Excerpts from an account by Henry Grace, allegedly captured and tortured by the Mumack, appeared in the *Monthly Review*, which remarked how the 'brutal cruelties' afforded readers with the 'painful entertainment, we usually find in historical details of distress.'[117] As Colley and others note, reading about these violent situations forced Britons to question their own underlying notions of race, cultural superiority, and feelings about a rapidly emerging imperial identity.[118] The sense of introspection, in part, is why such works proved so popular with audiences, a theme also explored by this study. Returning, then, to the question of which influences shaped press engagement with foreign affairs, it is clear that public interest with non-European travel - specifically journeys that involved violent experiences – was central. Before continuing with this analysis, however, it is useful briefly

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[115] Peter Williamson, *French and Indian cruelty; Exemplified in the Life, and Various Vicissitudes of Fortune, of Peter Williamson* (York, 1757). The ninth edition was printed in 1792.
[116] Ibid., p. 23.
[117] *The Monthly Review*, Mar. 1765, p. 239.
[118] Linda Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire', *Past & Present*, 168 (2000), pp. 170-193; Colley, *Captives,* pp. 241-296. See also John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York, 1994); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian, 'The Publication, Promotion, and Distribution of Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative in the Seventeenth Century', *Early American Literature*, 23 (1988), pp. 239-261.

to note a distinction this study makes between publications intended as active contributions to news coverage, and those considered as forms of literary entertainment.

Admittedly, the popularity of captivity and other travel literature was in large part thanks to circumstances they described, which often reflected or drew upon actual events reported in the news at that time. Williamson, for instance, claimed that it was during the siege of Oswego in 1756, when was captured, with the Eastburn narrative, similarly, set against the backdrop of frontier raids that followed in the wake of the British defeat at Monongahela in 1755. [119] Again, a famous account by John Zephaniah Holwell detailing those imprisoned in the Black Hole of Calcutta – explored in chapter five - takes place against the real life collapse of the East India Company in Bengal.[120] Travel literature was sensationalist but able to claim an air of legitimacy by situating individual narratives within the context of genuine news events. Yet despite offering some insight into the realities of overseas conflict, travel narratives were precisely that, a narrative. Compared to a news report or polemical essay that, ostensibly, sought to provide in-depth analysis or opinion relating to current affairs, travel literature if not a work of fiction was certainly extra-ordinary, concerned with telling fascinating stories of individual hardship or adventure. As the *Annual Register* explained:

> Perhaps the human mind can have no entertainment at once more congenial and more useful to it, than such stories of extraordinary distress and wonderful deliverances. In the former part our humanity is cultivated, in the latter is inspired a spirited hope and a trust in providence, which may enable us to act with resolution in the trying emergencies of life.[121]

The artificialness of those experiences distinguished travel literature from commentary produced and sold explicitly as news polemic, something recognised at the time:

> The adventurer upon unknown coasts, and the describer of distant regions, is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of the others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions; but when the volume is

[119] Williamson, *French and Indian Cruelty*, p. ii; Eastburne, *A Faithful Narrative of the Dangers,* p. 5.
[120] See chapter five.
[121] *Annual Register of the Year 1758* (London, 1759), p. 278.

> opened, nothing is found but such general accounts as to leave no distinct idea behind them, or such minute enumerations as few can read with either profit or delight.[122]

That travel accounts were primarily a form of entertainment does not mean they cannot provide useful context for exploring the formation of public opinion, and where relevant this study has explored a number of examples. Yet the literary nature of travel narratives also made them supplementary to news commentary.[123] The press reported and discussed details of overseas violence not as fictional distractions, but as ongoing current affairs. Indeed, returning to public engagement with overseas news in a broader sense, it is that perceived status of news polemic, as something recognised to be important in itself, that was potentially the most significant influence that shaped press exposure during the Seven Years' War.

Irrespective as to whether the decision was inadvertent, the press took broader themes such as travel curiosity, mercantile priorities, or concerns over national security, and provided them with a broader public platform. It is that very act of presenting something as an item of news polemic, specifically, which is of particular significance.[124] Early essayists Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, for instance, stressed the importance and utility of this process:

> Had the philosophers and great men of antiquity, who took so much pains in order to instruct mankind, and leave the world wiser and better than they found it; had they, I say, been possessed of the art of printing, there is no question but they would have made such an advantage of it, in dealing out their lectures to the public.[125]

As discussed already, the term 'public' simply meant information presented in the press and those who engaged with it, rather than an expression of broader national sentiment. Yet those who contributed to that public forum were also asserting to the relevance of that material to a wider audience. Foreign news, in particular military affairs, was presented in a

[122] 'The Idler, No. 98', in *Universal Chronicle*, 16 Feb. 1760, p. 57.
[123] Clare Brant, *Eighteenth Century Letters and British Culture* (New York, 2006), pp. 245-246.
[124] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 281.
[125] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *Spectator*, 23 Jul. 1711.

fashion that emphasised a sense of urgency or consequence, and in doing so implied the impact of those events - whether directly or indirectly - would be felt by the population at large. Much of this material provided little sense of context, yet the frequency and quantity of its appearance provides an indication of its perceived importance. In 1758, for instance, the *Critical Review* reviewed a pamphlet that sought to provide readers with full details of the American conflict.[126] Although the magazine editors did not think particularly highly of this specific publication, they did believe it would be of 'some satisfaction to the noisy politicians who harangue in coffee houses on the present posture of our public affairs, while they neglect their own private concerns'. Irrespective of content or quality, taking a pro-active or even passing interest in foreign affairs communalised the information, connecting readers to events purported to affect not only them but also the entire country.[127]

To follow the news was integral to what it meant to be part of civilised, polite society, and *British* society in particular. True Britons remained enthusiastic in maintaining knowledge of current affairs, especially those that could have direct consequences for the welfare of the body politic. A letter addressed to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for instance, declared:

> You know we are all politicians now, and methinks I have as good pretensions as any of the rest to utter my reveries on [the American war], and as I am neither soldier, nor sailor, but an honest citizen and impartial bystander, I shall deliver my crudities, which yet are sounded upon something like observation and experience with all the freedom of an Englishman, or, if you will, of a coffee-house patriot.[128]

The writer and politician Horace Walpole showed a similar level of pride in keeping abreast of foreign developments, writing in 1758 about his newfound interest in the 'charming savages' of North America and details of the conflict underway there.[129] Britons, as Jeremy Black observes, 'may have been xenophobic, but they were increasingly well-informed xenophobes', and it is that sense of engagement and belief in the essentialness of

[126] *Critical Review*, Nov. 1758, p. 436; Arthur Young, *The Theatre of the Present War in North America* (London, 1758).
[127] B. Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, p. 7; Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 191-194.
[128] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1758, p. 20.
[129] *Walpole to Richard Bentley*, 3 Nov. 1754, cited in Bickham, *Savages within the Empire,* p. 67.

remaining appraised of actions on the world stage, which shaped the broader climate that overseas news was produced in throughout 1754-64.[130]

As outlined over the course of this chapter, understanding the reasons why overseas news came to feature in print - from structural to broader popular trends - and explanations as to why that information was then afforded such status by commentators and audiences alike, is essential for exploring public discourse generated throughout the Seven Years' War. The effects of individual agency and wider socio-political attitudes that defined the period, were central to the culture of press engagement that existed by the mid-1750s. The press was not simply a passive observer, but an active participant in 'moulding' public discourse.[131] By recognising this context, a better analysis of the complex themes expressed in relation to violence committed against Britons from 1754-64 can be ascertained. Before turning to this issue, however, there is a need to explore two further aspects of the socio-cultural and intellectual framework from which the news press drew influence. Due to the specific focus afforded by this thesis to perceptions of the non-European world, and the legal-intellectual conventions underpinning British attitudes relating to military conflict, an appreciation of how these two subjects were understood by wider audiences at that time is essential. The next chapter will consider this in more detail.

[130] Black, *The English Press*, pp. 218-238.
[131] Black, 'The Press and Politics', p. 180.

CHAPTER TWO

RACE, CIVILISATION, AND MILITARY VALUES: POPULAR ATTITUDES ON THE EVE OF WAR

From the seventeenth century onwards, a rapid expansion in overseas trade, exploration, and colonisation led to increased contact between Europeans and non-Europeans. Reaction in Britain, in terms of public exposure afforded to these interactions, was dependant on a combination of factors - the specific circumstances surrounding an individual encounter, its recurrence, and, significantly, the changing apprehensions of those present at any given moment.[1] These meetings have famously been described as 'a complex saga of collisions, compromises and coming together of different cultures', and a fundamental pillar of those exchanges was the way in which a sense of 'otherness' often defined their impact.[2] As Colley summarised, 'quite simply, we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not', and in the decades leading up to the Seven Years' War this volatile mixture of prejudice, misinterpretation, and assumption would feed public discussion within Britain as to how perceived differences between Europeans and non-Europeans should be reconciled.[3] In parallel, the early-eighteenth century would see the formation of a pan-European discourse concerning war and the legality, or rather acceptability of violence committed during a military conflict. Though tracing its history to older, chivalric conventions, the rapid expansion of news commentary, combined with increasing public appetite for material and intellectual analysis relating to military affairs, would see a widely recognised consensus emerge as to what could and, crucially, should be expected from a European battlefield, in terms of the combatants involved and principles underpinning their behaviour.[4] Understanding the broader historical development of these two distinct, yet interconnected areas of public engagement is important, because the violent overseas episodes reported in the news press from 1754-1764 would inevitably be shaped by and evaluated against those changing trends.

This chapter explores how popular perceptions of the overseas world prior to 1750, helped to establish a broad cultural and intellectual framework that news commentators

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[1] P. J. Marhsall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Cambridge M.A., 1982), pp 1-4.

[2] Linda Colley, 'Clashes and Collaborations', *London Review of Books*, 18 (1996), pp. 8-9; Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern, 'Introduction: British Identities, Indigenous Peoples and the Empire', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999), p. 1.

[3] Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), pp. 309-329.

[4] See for instance Mark H. Danley, 'The British Political Press and Military Thought during the Seven Years' War', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. 359-398.

would use, and in some cases challenge, when reporting violence committed in India and North America during the Seven Years' War. First addressing some of the main assumptions and debates that emerged concerning the issue of human variation, race, and civilisation, the chapter moves on to explore some of the principal region-specific views that emerged, in particular, the idea of Noble Savagery and Oriental Despotism. Finally, the chapter considers British attitudes towards military conflict during the early eighteenth century, and the moral-legal principles underpinning those convictions. The intention here is not to provide an exhaustive study of British attitudes towards non-Europeans, or chart the full development of a military-legal framework, but rather provide a basis for understanding the socio-intellectual foundations of public reactions to violence committed throughout the Seven Years' War.

Human Variation: Providence, Nature, and Race

An emerging respect for the principles of rational enquiry during the Enlightenment would help to debunk the more outlandish of myths concerning the non-European world, yet conjecture, hyperbole, and confusion still remained prominent features of public analysis right through to at least the mid-eighteenth century.[5] The visit of four Iroquois representatives to the Court of Queen Anne in 1710 is an illustration of this persistent ambiguity. Although the Native Americans attracted significant public interest and were widely discussed by leading newspapers at the time, misleading depictions of the foreign delegation typifies the uncertainty of British perceptions relating to non-Europeans more generally. Portrayed as travelling, middle-eastern kings or exotic nobleman from the Orient, studies suggest that popular interest in the Amerindians 'rested almost solely on their generic Otherness', there was little understanding of where they had come from, or their broader relationship with European society.[6] Indeed, the same applies to British interpretations of the overseas world in general throughout this period.[7] Crucially, however, public engagement with the world beyond Europe's shores was a complex and non-linear process, with contradictory schools of thought emerging in parallel. Indeed, previous studies question if 'there was ever a single, identifiable British, still less 'European'

[5] Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* p. 188; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), p. 354.

[6] Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 22-28; Eric Hinderaker, 'The "Four Indian Kings" and the Imaginative Construction of the First British Empire', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 53 (1996), pp. 487-526.

[7] Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (London, 1993), pp. 9-10.

perspective on the non-European world'.[8] Instead, the ongoing exchange of travel knowledge, theology, philosophy, and folklore, all articulated through the increasingly influential and accessible medium of the news press represented an evolving framework through which overseas encounters were constantly re-analysed. This fluidity would play an important role throughout the hostilities of 1754-64.

Despite periodic re-appraisals of global geography, European religious scholars had long understood humanity as separated according to divine intervention.[9] God was responsible for the distribution of peoples throughout the world, as well as any differences manifest in those populations.[10] Non-European societies may be different, even alien some argued, but that distinction was negligible according to a biblical worldview. The theologian and early orientalist Edward Pococke, for instance, appreciated the uniqueness of Islam and Middle East culture, yet still approached it as an exotic inversion of Christianity, rather than something inherently distinct.[11] Colin Kidd, in particular, has demonstrated how this idea of biblical monogenism would continue to exert considerable influence throughout the eighteenth century. Indeed, many enlightenment thinkers were reluctant to challenge the fundamentals of this theological framework.[12] Clerical scholars such as William Warburton, Samuel Shuck, and later Adam Ferguson, all attempted to incorporate newer methodologies into a more traditional outlook, accepting the cultural divergence of human society, yet treating it as still divinely instigated.[13] Public reaction to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, for instance, reflected the continued belief in providence and the idea of a common fellowship between different peoples.[14] Divine orchestration could even explain the emergence of modern commerce, the Scottish theologian William Robertson arguing that 'the world may now be considered as one vast society, closely cemented by mutual wants; each part contributing its share towards the subsistence, the pleasure, and

[8] Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2003), p. 15.
[9] Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 28-32.
[10] Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* p. 19, p. 187; Karen O. Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (New York, 2000), p. 39.
[11] Ian Richard Netton, 'The Mysteries of Islam', in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds.), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1990), p. 29.
[12] Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1999). See also Kathleen Wilson, 'Review', *Social History*, 25 (2000), pp. 354–356; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), pp. 236-237, p. 356; Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* p. 136.
[13] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 233. See for instance Samuel Shuckford, *The Sacred and Profane History of the World, 2 vols.* (London, 1728); William Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated on the Principles of a Religious Deist* (London, 1742); Adam Ferguson, *Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1766), pp. 24-29.
[14] Jon Mee, 'Millenarian Visions and Utopian Speculations', in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Iain McCalman (eds.), *The Enlightenment World* (New York, 2004), p. 538.

improvement of the whole.'[15] European expansion overseas, however, posed a significant problem for traditional Christian concepts, particularly concerning the apparent inability of religion to explain why the practices and social structures of non-Europeans appeared so different to those found in Britain.[16] The various suggestions offered in response to this quandary underpinned many of the public discussions that took place throughout the Seven Years' War, specifically in terms of how the news press should interpret violence committed by indigenous populations.

Climatic theory offered an alternative view to religious doctrine, with human variance and the political state in which different societies existed attributed primarily to environmental factors.[17] In contrast with more extreme climates, temperate conditions in Europe encouraged productivity, competition, and a balance of power between its inhabitants. This explained why Europeans had achieved the greatest impact in terms of apparent success on the world stage. The humid environments of South-East Asia, by comparison, drove populations to apathy, inertia, and as will be explored later, a predisposition to accept despotism.[18] Influential publications such as the *Spirit of Laws*, translated and printed in English in 1750, expanded on the idea that environment was fundamental in shaping the material condition of life. As Montesquieu summarised, 'if it be true that the character of the mind, and the passions of the heart are extremely different in different climates, the laws ought to be relative both the difference of those passions, and to the difference of those characters'.[19] Indeed, such 'laziness of mind', brought about by the sultry conditions experienced in regions like the East Indies, was evident in the static nature of their laws, manners, customs, and even dress, all of which were claimed to be 'the same this very day (…) as they were a thousand years ago'.[20] The widely circulated volumes of the *Histoire Naturelle* advocated a similar departure from theological pretexts, its author, the Comte de Buffon, repeatedly stressing the importance of external conditions in shaping human society, whilst criticising traditional concepts of pre-formation.[21] Once again, geography not scripture explained human variation. Significantly, however,

[15] William Robertson, *The Situation of the World at the time of Christ's Appearance* (Edinburgh, 1755), p. 11.
[16] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 355.
[17] David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the 18th Century* (London, 2002), pp. 59-60.
[18] Silvia Sebastiani, 'Nations, Nationalism, and National Characters', in Aaron Garrett (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century Philosophy* (New York, 2014), p. 597.
[19] Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws, Translated from the French*, Vol. I (London, 1750), p. 316.
[20] Ibid., p. 322.
[21] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, pp. 59-60. See also Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture Updated Edition* (New York, 2001), ch. 4; Sandra Knapp, 'George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon', in Robert Huxley (ed.), *The Great Naturalists: From Aristotle to Darwin* (London, 2007), pp. 140–148.

naturalist challenges to religious orthodoxy did not always focus on the issue of environment.

British intellectuals throughout the early-eighteenth century increasingly saw biblical folklore - in terms of tool for understanding human development - as something that distracted Britons from appreciating their true relationship with the wider world. The same was also true of climate; national cultures were not hostages to environment, but determined by 'conjectural circumstance'.[22] Nature, in this sense, was not a physical or divinely orchestrated stimulus that shaped behaviour, but a broader process of social evolution. Whig political narratives showed the Protestant settlements of 1688 and 1714 as indicators of historical progress, yet it was those same developments, which also defined the manners and characteristics of Britons in the eighteenth century – free, tolerant, and commercial. Crucially, the same rationale applied to all nations. As David Hume argued in his essay *On National Characters*, human nature was uniform. The historic condition of a society, not the environment, shaped its natural passions, and 'If we run over the whole globe, or revolve all the annals of history, we shall discover everywhere signs of this sympathy or contagion of manners, and none of the influence of air or climate.[23] Britons had been and could be as 'savage' as any nation under the right circumstances. So too did other societies possess that same potential for change:

> The manners of a people change very considerably from one age to another; either by great alterations in their government, by the mixtures of new people, or by that inconstancy, to which all human affairs are subject. The ingenuity and industry of the ancient Greeks have nothing in common with the stupidity and indolence of the present inhabitants, of those regions. Candour, bravery, and love of liberty formed the character of the ancient Romans; as subtilty, cowardice, and a slavish disposition do that of the modern.[24]

Though Hume would later debate whether some form of 'polygenetic differentiation' potentially set Europeans apart non-Europeans, the idea of historical progress remained his

[22] Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 231-238.
[23] David Hume, *Three Essays, Moral and Political* (London, 1748), p. 11.
[24] Ibid., p. 14

principal focus and that explanations for human difference were more complex than theological or climatic interpretations alone could explain.[25] This idea of socio-cultural advancement would have significant implications for the way British commentators would frame both Mughal and Amerindian society, something explored in more detail later in the chapter. The relevance here is that despite rejecting religious and environmental interpretations for human variation, the Humean view is still similar in that suggests the idea of a common heritage for humanity, irrespective of how or why the global population had become so diverse over time.

Despite the answers that theology and philosophical analysis of human society appeared to offer, the broader popular awareness of overseas interactions often encouraged an entirely different set of conclusions. Indeed, Kathleen Wilson questions whether a top-down intellectual discourse, adequately reflects the complexity of an early-eighteenth century 'mental universe', one that increasingly experienced and evaluated the non-European world by means of 'economic projectors, pro-imperial tracts, voyage accounts, periodicals, plays and ephemeral histories'.[26] Public attitudes associated with the Atlantic slave trade, for instance, is an illustration of this broader engagement with the wider world and the alternative lens that individuals chose to conceive of its inhabitants. Instead of parity promoted by naturalist and theological interpretations, slavery and the issue of race emphasised the apparent distinctiveness and superiority of Britons, specifically white Britons. This alternative global outlook represents a parallel strand of discourse and is further reason why public engagement with overseas affairs during the Seven Years' War was not only fluid but also often contentious.

The subject of race, though an evolving concept throughout the early-eighteenth century, was central in fostering notions of difference between Europeans and non-Europeans. Winthrop Jordan for example has argued that it was the primary driver of attitudes towards overseas populations throughout the period.[27] Although ideas of civility or economics might play a role in shaping those perceptions, they remained secondary to the impact caused by the colour of an individual, with attitudes towards those of African descent considered the most important. Again, religion continued to play a key role with

[25] Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress* (New York, 2013), pp. 23-24.
[26] Wilson, 'Review', p. 355.
[27] Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1969); James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro in English Society, 1555-1945* (London, 1973).

those of black skin often posited as the descendants of damned biblical figures such as Cain or Ham.[28] Christianity, in this sense, was not inclusive but exclusive, something that encouraged and legitimised division. As Rebecca Goetz has shown in a study of Chesapeake politics, despite the passing of legislation in 1667 that prevented slaves claiming a right to freedom on the grounds of their having been baptised, many slave-owners still chose not to convert their so-called property to the Christian faith. Regardless of the strengthened guarantees, Goetz demonstrates how language used by the colonial burgesses reveals a deeper belief, the idea that black Africans were inherently different from their European masters and were incapable of understanding and thus truly accepting the tenets of Christianity.[29] Similar observations apply to legislation passed in 1733 by the Jamaican House of Assembly, which granted all third generation persons of mixed ancestry the same rights and privileges as any British subject. Ostensibly, providing a route for descendants of African slaves to become fully integrated into society, in reality the law reinforced the importance of skin colour in determining national identity so that to be considered British a person needed to be 'free from all taint of the Negroe race'.[30] In both cases, it was physical appearance, principally the blackness of Africans, which marked their distinction from Britons.

Skin colour was certainly an integral feature of developing public attitudes towards non-Europeans, yet it is wrong to suggest that superficial impressions alone formed perceptions of race. George Mosse described the Enlightenment as a period where 'human nature came to be defined in aesthetic terms, with significant stress on the outward physical signs of inner rationality and harmony'.[31] Exterior appearance in itself was not important, rather what it represented - personal character, morality, and intelligence. Martin Bernal, for instance, considered the works of Hellenistic artists from the period, who saw Greek classicism as the outward expression of a superior European culture, defined in contrast with the perceived vulgarity of Africa and the Middle East.[32] This concept of aesthetic 'ugliness' and the racial connotations underpinning it, gained prominence within the arts; blackness of skin was increasingly framed in opposition to a

[28] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 356.
[29] Rebecca Goetz, '"The Child Should be Made a Christian": Baptism, Race, and Identity in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake', in Morris, Christopher and Garrigus, John D. (eds.), *Assumed Identities: The Meanings of Race in the Atlantic World* (University of Texas, 2010), pp. 46-70.
[30] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003), p. 148.
[31] Wilson, *The Island Race*., p. 151; George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (London, 1978), pp. 2-24.
[32] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, pp. 7-21.

prescribed notion of beauty, both of body and soul.[33] Indeed, theatre productions from the period demonstrate how the perceived 'core' of whiteness often went beyond physical appearance. Actors who blacked their faces to play an African slave or prince typically uncovered their whiteness at the end of a performance, demonstrating that a virtuous individual, irrespective of skin colour, was white at heart; 'race is as easily removed as washing or smudging, but the point was also to reveal the reassuringly ineradicable whiteness within.'[34] Such views potentially represented a more humanist interpretation of race, where outward appearance meant nothing compared to the inner personality of an individual, similar to a Humean view of universal morality. Yet the inherent contradictions, as Felicity A. Nussbaum shows, remained evident with frequent use of sexualised stereotypes, among other tropes, and an overriding sense that complexion was 'nominal if black, but essential if white'.[35] In the years prior to the Seven Years' War, therefore, physiognomy and the perceived opposition of blackness to the European ideal increasingly influenced British attitudes towards the overseas world.[36]

Despite its importance, the extent to which racial perception was the most significant determinant of attitudes expressed in the press towards non-Europeans is debatable. Enlightenment-era explanations for perceived biological differences, and the attitudes they engendered, were far more complicated than a result of simple juxtapositions of white skin with black.[37] Framing the concept of race in such a binary format is potentially misleading, belittling the complexity of relationships between individual actors, and the broader opinions generated in response to those interactions.[38] As touched upon earlier, for instance, some have accused Hume of a philosophy-inspired racism for the suggestion that black populations were, typically, incapable of attaining a skill in or appreciation for the arts and science. [39] Others argue, however, that such remarks were observations about individuals rather than race and that Hume believed ongoing

[33] Sander L. Gilman, 'The Figure of the Black in the Aesthetic', *Theories of Eighteenth-century Studies*, 8 (1975), pp. 373-391.
[34] Felicity A. Nussbaum, 'The Theatre of Empire: Racial Counterfeit, Racial Realism', in Kathleen Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 84.
[35] Ibid., 77
[36] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 7-21.
[37] See Kathleen Brown, 'Native Americans and Early Modern Concepts of Race', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and others: British Encounters with indigenous peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999), p. 127; Hannah Augstein, 'Introduction', in Hannah Augstein (ed.), *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850* (London, 1996), pp. ix-xxxii.
[38] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 2.
[39] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 34-37.

domestic circumstances prevented Africans from acquiring European levels of sophistication, rather than a physical or mental impediment. Non-white skin was coincidental rather than symptomatic, a characteristic of those from regions where inferior political conditions had long existed, but not indicative of any innate difference in a biological sense. Attitudes towards Native Americans are a further illustration of this complexity. Early depictions, such as the widely circulated paintings by John White, challenged many of the supposed ideals of aesthetic beauty, the Indians being clearly non-white, yet portrayed as sleek, athletic, and physically striking.[40] Robert Beverly later stated Native Americans to be 'so perfect in their outward frame, that I never heard of one single Indian, that was either dwarfish, crooked, bandy legged, or otherwise misshapen', and their women were also 'generally beautiful, possessing an uncommon delicacy of shape and features, and wanting no charm, but that of a fair complexion'.[41] Compliments of this sort raise questions as to whether the issue of race, interpreted primarily as a visual experience, can fully explain the range of attitudes Britons felt towards non-European populations, or the place they occupied in popular mind-sets throughout the Seven Years' War in particular. Race was an ambiguous concept in the mid-eighteenth century, used in multiple contexts, often with no reference to the appearance of an individual.[42] Another option is not to focus on those who may have been differentiated because of aesthetic or racial perception, and instead consider the process of categorisation in itself, the desire to 'devise natural systems which assigned mankind a place among its fellow creatures' and the wider world.[43]

Publication of the highly influential *Systema Naturae* by Carl Linnaeus in 1735, through to its revised tenth edition in 1758, represents an emerging taxonomic approach to the question of human difference. A system of binomial nomenclature allocated all species, including humans, to a specific sub-group according to physical characteristics. Also drawing on aspects of climatic theory, environmental distinctions helped further divide humanity into separate categories. Yet where Montesquieu argued that temperate conditions led to dynamic, culturally active societies, the Linnaean taxonomy sought to refine that distinction through scientific method. The process of classification became a

[40] Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature and Transatlantic Culture 1756-1830* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 1; Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* pp. 27-28. Although the paintings by John White were produced in 1587, their popularity ensured they were still being re-produced well into the eighteenth century.
[41] Robert Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia, in Four Parts. Book III* (London, 1705), p. 2.
[42] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 16.
[43] Brown, 'Native Americans and Early Modern Concepts of Race', p. 127.

goal in itself. Europeans became *Europaeus albus,* with white skin indicative of ingenuity and of a people who benefited from effective governance - a theme prevalent in coverage relating to the Mughal Empire in particular, throughout 1754-64. Native Americans, by contrast, were classed *Americanus rubescus*, content in their natural state, but simultaneously defined and restricted by those same conditions.[44] These methods were demonstrative of an early anthropologic attitude towards overseas populations, which treated non-Europeans as a case study or experiment.[45] Despite obvious racial connotations and inherent eurocentrism, the empirical motivations underpinning this approach were an attempt to avoid religious dogma and chauvinism. Such principles were indicative of a broader 'Newtonian approach' to understanding morality and history, human nature and the natural sciences.[46] Agreement with the Linnaean rationale, however, was by no means universal. Lord Kames, for instance, disagreed with a fixed classification applied to different groups and instead outlined a polygenetic humanity, where historical context created distinct species. Similar to the Humean view that social conditions shaped a population, Kames went further by suggesting physical traits and national temperament, over time, became established racial characteristics in their own right.[47] Those said to have abandoned themselves to every appetite 'are tyrannized by passion and have no consistent rule of conduct'; such behaviour formed the character of savage nations and explained their perceived difference with Europeans.[48] In a practical sense, however, whether it be taxonomic, naturalist, religious, or historical, most attempts at explaining human variation resulted in similar prejudicial distinctions as those based solely on visual or physiognomic responses to the colour of an individual. The hierarchy remained the same, placing the indigenous inhabitants of North America, Africa, or India in an inferior position to their British counterparts. Intellectual discourse concerning the non-European world was multifaceted by the Seven Years' War era, but separate strands still often rested upon a series of common themes and assumptions.

There is no single lens that Britons in the mid-eighteenth century used when attempting to frame or understand overseas populations. This was a period where

[44] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 17, pp. 61-62; Christopher Fox, 'Introduction: How to Prepare a Noble Savage: The Spectacle of Human Science', and Philip Sloan, 'The Gaze of Natural History', in C. Fox, R. Porter and R. Wokler (eds.), *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth Century Domains* (Berkley, 1995), pp. 1-30, pp. 121-151.
[45] Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory,* ch. 2; G. W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1991).
[46] Ian Hampshier-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought: Major Political Thinkers from Hobbes to Marx* (London, 1992), pp. 119-121.
[47] Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 73.
[48] Lord Kames, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (London, 1758), p. 106.

knowledge and beliefs were in a process of transition and scrutiny. Yet approaching the non-European world from a position of professed rationality, Enlightenment thinkers and early social scientists who explored the subject also provided their own vision of the past, present, and future direction of the British nation. It was these discussions, in particular, that established some of the more influential impressions of North America and India, which news writers then used as the basis for reporting and evaluating violence committed in those regions from 1754-1764.

Amerindians: Ancient Briton, Noble Savage, or Bloodthirsty Barbarian

In the decades prior to the Seven Years' War, various socio-philosophical works attempted to provide an overriding framework through which to observe and understand the native populations of North America. A common theme running through many of those studies is the concept of primitivism, that by observing Amerindian and other aboriginal cultures, Britons were looking at an earlier version of themselves and their own society. Travel through space, as described by Jonathan Lamb, 'amounted to travel through time (...) the curious observer could travel back and forth between them, discriminating as minutely as he pleased'.[49] This idea had roots in the preceding century, John Locke having declared 'in the beginning all the world was America'.[50] Indeed, these earlier writings would have a lasting influence on public discourse in the eighteenth century. Lockean subsistence theory, for instance, argued neither environment nor biology determined the nature of a society, rather the means by which it supported itself. All populations, including Britons, had at one time shared a similar nomadic existence, famously described by another seventeenth century contemporary as a 'state of nature'.[51] Civilised states, in contrast, had embraced the advantages of agriculture, organised labour, and property, which in keeping with the religious context of the period represented the best way of maintaining God's creation.[52] The resulting prosperity afforded that society the hallmarks of modernity - civic governance, education, culture, manners, and taste. The use of similar arguments by mid-eighteenth century commentators reflects a continuing belief in that historical process, the

[49] Jonathan Lamb, 'Anthropology', in Jack Lynch (ed.), *Samuel Johnson in Context* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 112; Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* pp. 187-189.
[50] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 29. See also David Alvarez, 'Difference and Enlightenment Violence, Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson', *The Eighteenth Century*, 53 (2012), pp. 113-118.
[51] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (ed.) Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 62.
[52] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 60; Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 37-67; Duncan Ivison, 'The Nature of Rights and the History of Empire', in David Armitage (ed.), *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 197

Universal Magazine stating 'whoever considers the Americans of this day, not only studies the manners of a remove present nation, but studies, in some measure, the antiquities of all nations'.[53] Of particular relevance to this study is not the longevity of primitivism as a theme, but its broader consequences, namely, the imposition of European ideals, status, and notions of social progress on to the Amerindian world.

The Lockean emphasis on labour and property, as apparent signifiers of cultural sophistication, converted social differences into defined hierarchical positions, something that would have significant implications on the perceived rights of Indian nations in North America. Take the issue of territorial sovereignty - if permanent settlement and participatory civic organisation bestowed upon those who engaged in it ownership of the land, then aboriginal societies would need to give way to the 'superior' claims of incoming colonial settlers.[54] Despite early depictions that had shown familiar scenes of organised dwellings and crop enclosures, the permanence of Indian settlements was often far more fluid, re-locating in line with seasonal resources.[55] Yet compared with the fixed homesteads of Europeans, migratory Amerindian communities did not maintain or 'improve' the land to a sufficient degree to qualify under a Lockean proprietary framework - as a result, disputes were inevitable. Though many factors contributed to Anglo-Indian antipathy, British perceptions of cultural superiority, and the sense of entitlement afforded by that apparent status, were responsible for much of the discord. These themes would continue right through to the French and Indian War, yet as the later chapters show although news commentators would draw upon aspects of primitivism in response to Amerindian violence, they also used it to analyse and even question the apparent irreproachability of British actions overseas. Indeed, as a lens for approaching the subject of North America, primitivism is intriguing precisely because of the different conclusions it could be used to support. The increasing prominence of stadial economic theories is one example.

The Scottish Enlightenment produced an outpouring of studies that took specific interest in explaining the perceived differences between Amerindians and Europeans. Similar to the Lockean interpretation, disparities between the two cultures were not an indication of biological or climatic differences but simply because Amerindians had not

[53] *Universal Magazine*, May 1757, p. 193.
[54] Ivison, 'The Nature of Rights and the History of Empire', p. 205; Jack P. Greene, 'Introduction: Empire and Liberty', and Elizabeth Mancke, 'The Languages of Liberty in British North America, 1607-1776' both in Greene (ed.), *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 47-49, p. 200.
[55] Ogborn, *Global Lives*, pp. 54-63.

moved beyond a 'low' stage of social progress. Yet where earlier insights used primitivism to legitimise British status and authority, stadial interpretations, particularly from 1750 onwards, were more concerned with highlighting the process and benefits of socio-economic development. Although these ideas would gain increasing prominence in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, their inspirational and intellectual origins lie in the years that preceded the conflict.[56] Building on Humean principles, figures such as Adam Smith and John Millar advocated a materialist approach to global history, where variation between societies was explained in terms of economic advancement, each passing through four broad stages of productivity. The means of production determined the priorities and behaviour of a society, Britain as a commercial nation having already moved beyond a hunter-gather, pasturage, and agrarian existence.[57] Of particular relevance, however, is that such interpretations posited no inherent difference between savage nations and civilised with each capable of violent conduct under the relevant circumstances. This potentially had profound influence over British responses to news of Amerindian violence.

Stadial evolution suggested that the propensity for a society to engage in violence largely depended on the extent of its development and productivity. Referring to the act of murdering a child during times of hardship, for instance, Adam Smith argued:

> This practice prevails among all savage nations; and in that rudest and lowest state of society is undoubtedly more pardonable than in any other. The extreme indigence of a savage is often such that he himself is frequently posted to the greatest extremity of hunger he often dies of pure want, and it is frequently impossible for him to support both himself and his child.[58]

Britons were less likely to resort to such extreme action, precisely because their society had moved beyond base physical needs - shelter, food, and security. Yet by that same rationale, any characteristics displayed by Native Americans, even the most shocking, were largely the result of, and thus potentially excused by socio-economic conditions. The same was true of their more general state of mind:

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[56] See Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh, 1767); John Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (London, 1771); William Robertson, *The History of America*, 2 vols. (London, 1777).

[57] Porter, *Enlightenment*, pp. 253-254; Hampshier-Monk, A History of Modern, p. 147; Ivison, 'The Nature of Rights and the History of Empire', p. 196

[58] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London, 1759), p. 410.

> Among North Americans it is not uncommon for persons of the tenderest age (...) to drown themselves upon receiving only a slight reprimand from their mothers, and this too without expressing any passion or saying anything.[59]

In terms of acceptable or rational conduct, such behaviour presented the Amerindians as entirely set apart from their British counterparts, yet those actions were not a sign of fundamental difference, but a living illustration of proto-European culture. Lord Kames made a similar observation, stating how 'the most polished nations differ only from savages in refinement of taste and manners'.[60] Ancient Britons had likely been the same at some point, defined by the necessities of a more primitive existence. Indeed, for Adam Ferguson the experience of savagery, in itself, was an essential part of social development:

> The latest efforts of human invention are but a continuation of certain devices which were practised in the earliest ages of the world, and in the rudest state of mankind. What the savage projects, or observes, in the forest, are the steps which led nations, more advanced, from the architecture of the cottage to that of the palace, and conducted the human mind from the perceptions of sense to the general conclusions of science.[61]

The study of Native Americans validated the route Britain had taken in terms of its own cultural and economic progress, but also raised the question as to whether Indian violence was if not condonable, then at least understandable. Again, these themes and the public discussion they generated are evident in news coverage produced throughout the Seven Years' War, as later chapters will show.

Despite claiming to focus chiefly on the process of socio-economic development, as with earlier explanations for human variation, hierarchy remained a persistent, if implicit feature of many enlightenment studies. Voltaire, for instance, emphasised the primacy of European culture in highly influential works such as his *Essay on the Manners of Nations*, wherein the levels of development Europe had reached was indicative of its inherent

[59] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiment*, p. 407.
[60] Kames, *Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, p. 109.
[61] Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 13.

superiority.[62] Edmund Burke expressed similar views, focussing on the importance of aestheticism and the belief that Europeans, by means of their cultural sophistication, enjoyed a heightened appreciation for it.[63] Again, this sense of precedence is also apparent in observations made by Kames who argued 'that even the greatest savage is destitute of moral sense.' Compared with the primitive condition of Amerindians, Britons had benefited from a 'gradual improvement' that allowed for a more complex and, ultimately, less violent society:

> The malevolent passions, above all, are brought under the strictest discipline, if not totally eradicated. Instead of unbounded revenge for the smallest injury, we acquire a degree of self-denial to overlook trifling wrongs, and in greater wrongs to be satisfied with moderate reparation.[64]

Stadial interpretations fostered a similar notion of eurocentrism, albeit one grounded in the idea of socio-economic advancement as opposed to an explicit racial-orientated distinction. As Bindman argues, the mid-eighteenth century became a period where 'the traditional line between civilization and barbarism was drawn between Europe and the rest of the world'.[65] This is not to say, however, that concepts of primitivism necessarily lead to an outright pro-European stance, as public engagement with the French and Indian conflict would demonstrate.

The idea that Amerindians represented a form of proto-European culture did not always equate to a label of inferiority. That Britain had become a modern, commercial nation was for some a regressive development, certainly not one that made Britons superior to aboriginal societies. Artistic and literary imagery of exotic lands, such as those produced by William Hodges, were infused with romantic historicism.[66] The 'other', as imagined in those works, became an allegorical device, where depictions of aboriginal culture represented an idealised vision of European history. Presented as carefree, physically beautiful, and unspoilt by religious dispute or political turmoil, the innocent or

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[62] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, pp. 23-25,
[63] Ibid., p. 73. See also Bindman, '"A Voluptuous Alliance between Africa and Europe": Hogarth's Africans', in Bernadette Fort and Angela Rosenthal, (eds.), *The Other Hogarth: Aesthetics of Difference* (Princeton NJ, 2001), pp. 260-269.
[64] Kames, *Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*, p. 107.
[65] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, pp. 24-25.
[66] Harriet Guest, *Empire, Barbarism, and Civilisation: James Cook, William Hodges, and the Return to the Pacific* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 169-170.

'noble savage' became a rallying call, a belief that Britons should aspire to a more basic, virtuous existence just as their ancestral forbearers had.[67] These themes would gain prominence with later British explorations to Tahiti and the Pacific region, yet their intellectual foundations lie in the preceding decades, where they centred on the perceived virtue of Amerindian society. By the 1750s, various satirical works had already compared the supposed savagery of Native Americans, with the image of a superficial and hypocritical European civilisation, embraced by decadent, fashion-obsessed elites.[68] An early account by John Lawson, though clear in outlining many of the Indians' perceived faults, also noted many of their admirable qualities, including an unfailing sense of duty 'they never prove traitors to their native country, but rather choose death than partake and side with the enemy.[69] It was Europeans, by comparison, who ought to be ashamed of their hypocrisy, particularly when it came to moral integrity:

> We trade with them, it's true, but to what end? Not to show the steps of virtue, and the golden rule, to do as we would be done by. No, we have furnished them with the vice of drunkenness, which is the open road to all others, and daily cheat them in everything we sell and esteem it a gift of Christianity, not to sell them so cheap as we do the Christians, as we call ourselves.[70]

Another influential work made similar observations. Translated into English in the 1730s, an account by Baron de Lahontan described his time spent with those he referred to as 'naked philosophers'. In his view, the Amerindians displayed such 'wisdom and acuteness' that it cast Europe in poor light by comparison:

> I envy the state of a poor Savage, who tramples upon laws, and pays homage to no sceptre. I wish I could spend the rest of my life in his hut, and so be no longer exposed to the chagrin of bending the knee to a set of men, that sacrifice the public good to their private interest, and are born to plague honest men.[71]

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[67] Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* pp. 187- 189.
[68] Bindman, *Ape to Apollo*, p. 30.
[69] John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London, 1709), p. 235.
[70] Ibid., p. 236.
[71] Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North America* (London, 1703), pp. 5-8.

This desire to place Amerindians on a pedestal owed much to a wider disillusionment with the perceived corruption of European political, cultural, and religious institutions, and exportation of that vice overseas.[72] Alexander Pope, for instance, adopted an 'anti-conquest' stance, where territorial expansion led to moral bankruptcy and 'diminution of the human to the economic'.[73] This lay in stark contrast with aboriginal societies, which benefited from a restrained sense of equilibrium with their surroundings and neighbours. Themes evident in these earlier works would have lasting influence throughout the century.

Writing in the period immediately after the Seven Years' War, Adam Ferguson articulated a growing concern that as Britain became increasingly affluent and consumer-orientated, so the potential for moral decay and a loss of virtue grew as well. Published in 1767, his essay on civil society fed into a wider interest with the idea of social decline:

> The virtues of men have shone most during their struggles, not after the attainment of their ends. Those ends themselves, though attained by virtue, are frequently the causes of corruption and vice. Mankind, in aspiring to national felicity, have substituted arts which increase their riches, instead of those which improve their nature.[74]

In contrast with the profligacy found in Britain, Amerindians were said to enjoy a 'domestic society conducted with order, and the absence of vicious dispositions', and that such considerations 'give to their ordinary deportment an air of phlegm and composure superior to what is possessed among polished nations.'[75] This is not to say Ferguson or contemporaries such as Edward Gibbon or Oliver Smith, exalted savagery, rather that Britons would do well to remember the importance of compassion, humility, honour, and civic morality.[76] The author of a *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*, already into its third edition by 1755, argued that:

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[72] Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* pp. 201-202.
[73] Karen O' Brien, 'Benevolence in the Case of the British Empire 1680-1800', in David Armitage (ed.), *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 170-171.
[74] Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 316.
[75] Ibid., pp. 131-132.
[76] See for instance Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 1776); Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village, A Poem* (London, 1770).

> None of the greatest Roman Heroes have discovered a greater love to their country, or a greater contempt of death, than these people called barbarians have done, when liberty came in competition. Indeed, I think our Indians have outdone the Romans in this particular.[77]

The apparent simplicity of Native American culture represented a form of utopian escapism, a means for attacking the licentiousness of British society and the dangers of leaving it unchecked. Admittedly, British-authored works that focussed exclusively on the Amerindian world were few in number before the Seven Years' War.[78] Yet the featuring of Native Americans as part of a wider literary and intellectual debate, firmly established the theme of 'Noble Savagery' in public discourse by the outbreak of hostilities in 1755. Crucially - for this study at least - those themes are also evident in news commentary from the period through which most Britons experienced and evaluated Amerindian society.

Coverage afforded to the French and Indian conflict provides numerous examples of public interest in the idea of noble savagery, and the influence it could exert. A piece in the *London Magazine*, for instance, juxtaposed the 'gay Briton, whose heart is stained with vices, and estranged from natural affection', with the perceived integrity of Amerindians, who were closer in stature to heroic figures from antiquity.[79] Another publication, also from 1758, made similar remarks, explaining how Native American morals were similar to those adhered by the ancient Greeks; 'a just sense of Liberty makes the Indians impatient of wrongs, the simplicity of their manners, and strict attachment to justice, renders them cautious of giving offences'.[80] Excerpts from works by Rousseau, the most prominent advocate of such natural virtues, appeared in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, both of which highlighted the suggestion that a state of savagery was 'the best for man, and that nothing could have drawn him out of it but some fatal accident.'[81] Indeed, the excerpt went as far to suggest that:

> As long as men remained satisfied with their rustic cabins, as long as they confined themselves to the use of clothes made of the

[77] Colden Cadwallader, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada,* (London, 1755), pp. iv-v.
[78] Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, p. 55, 59.
[79] *London Magazine*, Nov. 1758, p. 566; Marshall and Williams, *Great Map of Mankind,* p. 191.
[80] Anon, *State of the British and French Colonies in North America* (London, 1755), p. 23.
[81] *Critical Review*, Feb. 1762, p. 101; *Monthly Review*, May 1762, p. 342. See also Rousseau, *Discourse upon the Origin of the Inequality among Mankind* (London, 1755).

> skins of other animals (...) they lived free, healthy, honest and happy, as much as their nature would admit, and continued to enjoy with each other all the pleasures of an independent intercourse.[82]

Rousseauian ideas of primitivism - something Britons should admire, even emulate - was a powerful theme throughout Seven Years' War news coverage. Yet as previous studies caution, there is often a tendency to overstate the prominence and credibility of noble savagery as a concept in mid-eighteenth century public discourse.[83]

Representations of Indian society that offered idyllic images of hunter-gatherer communities painted a very different picture from the experience of those on the ground, or at least as reported by the press. Such divergence of opinion, in part, was thanks to a complex and evolving series of relationships between the indigenous population and colonial settlers. Indeed, recent academic trends present British perceptions of Native Americans as the consequence of a drawn out process of reciprocal adaptation. A degree of interdependence often defined early interactions between the two cultures, driven by a common desire for trade, diplomacy and security. Now referred to as the 'middle ground', Native American and European perceptions of each other formed in response to those shared circumstances.[84] The indigenous inhabitants of North America first encountered by colonial settlers in the sixteenth century, for instance, were entirely different to those who featured as subjects for public interest in the mid-eighteenth century.[85] A combination of disease, territorial expansion and increasing reliance on imported European goods and weapons, had led to profound changes within Native American society. In a similar fashion, British colonists had also needed to adapt to the realities of frontier life by adopting indigenous customs - the incorporation of scalping as a military tactic, smoking tobacco, the giving of gifts and exchange of wampum during negotiations, being illustrations of that cultural flexibility.

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[82] *Critical Review*, Feb. 1762, p. 102.
[83] Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, pp. 92-95.
[84] See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815* (Cambridge, 1991); Daniel K. Richter, 'Native Peoples of North America and the Eighteenth Century British Empire', in P.J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol. II, The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 347-350.
[85] Bickham, *Savages within the Empire,* pp. 2-4; See also Phillip D. Morgan, 'Encounters between British and "indigenous" peoples, c. 1500 – c. 1800', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999), p. 42.

Even before the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, many commentators in Britain already appear to have been aware of the close-knit, often blurred relationship between Europeans and Amerindians. An article in the November 1754 edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine* remarked how 'the Indians, like the rest of the world, will bring their skins to the best market. And if we establish factories and trading houses at convenient places in the mountains, and give better goods, and more in exchange than the French do, we shall have the Indian trade'.[86] As Alecia Simmonds highlights, the perceived importance of these 'commercial friendships' was emphasised by theorists such as Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, who concluded that nations were obliged to be cordial for mutual prosperity and that such interactions formed the basis of civil society.[87] Similar observations appear in an account from 1755, the author explaining that it was 'to the hospitality and assistance of these friendly Indians, I am much indebted, for I not only subsisted on what they shot, but their first care was to erect a bark hut, at the approach of rain to keep me and my cargo from wet.'[88] Other essays emphasised the extent to which many Indian nations were as much victims of French or Spanish aggression as the British, and so required both sympathy and friendship in the face of a common foe. An early account by John Lawson explained how the neighbouring Indians of Carolina were 'ever faithful to the English, and have proved themselves brave and true on all occasions', having suffered under Spanish oppression.[89] The same message appears in a later piece from 1755, this time offering a similar impression of the French:

> In 1730 they utterly extirpated the whole tribe called Nautchee (...) The French did this when they were in profound peace with these Indians under the sanction of a formal treaty; but finding they continued an intercourse and trade with the English, they fell upon them in the night, and massacred men, women and children, not even sparing those they took alive, but put them to death in the most inhuman and cruel torments.[90]

[86] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1754, pp. 503-504.
[87] Alecia Simmonds, 'Friendship, Imperial Violence and the Law of Nations: The Case of Late-Eighteenth Century British Oceania', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42 (2014), pp. 645-666. See also Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law* (London, 1748), pp. 167-169.
[88] Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida* (London, 1755), pp. viii-ix.
[89] Lawson, *New Voyage to Carolina*, p. 4.
[90] Ellis Huske, *The Present State of North America* (London, 1755), pp. 67-68.

Public attitudes towards Native Americans were complicated precisely because relationships on the ground were, and had been from the start, complex and constantly evolving. What is clear, however, is that ideas of primitivism alone do not offer an adequate picture for how Britons understood Anglo-Indian interactions at the time. Indeed, the clearest evidence that 'noble savagery', as an intellectual framework, does not accurately reflect how the mid-eighteenth century press engaged with Amerindians is the overwhelming focus afforded to their apparent bloodlust and barbarity.

By the late 1750s the violent nature of Native American warfare, and the perceived threat it posed to British settlers and military forces, had become the most prominent feature of commentary relating to Amerindians. Supplemented with ongoing reports of broken treaties, native uprisings, and alliances with rival European powers, graphic accounts printed in newspapers throughout the Seven Years' War represented a crescendo in negative attitudes towards Native Americans, far removed from those who posited Indians as paragons of natural virtue.[91] Equally, however, as later chapters will demonstrate, just because commentary might present Amerindians as dangerous or a cruel adversary did not necessarily mean they were viewed as inferior or different to Europeans. Evidence suggests that news writers often took a far more pragmatic approach to North American hostilities and combatants. An early account published by Robert Beverly, for instance, explained how the Indians were an 'implacable' foe, willing to 'destroy man, woman, and child, to prevent all future resentments', yet they could also be magnanimous in forging a lasting peace:

> They use formal embassies for treating and very ceremonious ways in concluding of peace, or release some other memorable actions, such as burying a tomahawk, and raising a heap of stones thereon (...) or planting a tree, in token that all enmity is buried with the tomahawk, that all the desolations of war are at an end, and that friendship shall flourish among them, like a tree.[92]

A more rounded perspective of Native Americans, in turn, demanded a more practical response from news commentators. Violent encounters between Britons and Native

[91] Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, pp. 92-95; Fulford, *Romantic Indians*, p. 51; Matthew C. Ward, 'Understanding Native American Alliances', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. 46-71.
[92] Beverly, *History and Present State of Virginia,* pp. 26-27.

Americans frequently led to the perception that Indians were inherently untrustworthy, yet those same interpretations could also suggest commonality rather than disparity. [93] Indians exploited English vulnerability wherever possible, in much the same way rival European powers took advantage of one another if given the opportunity. To be treacherous implied a degree of cunning, guile, and intelligence, traits associated with supposedly civilised cultures. Such behaviour demanded respect. Military necessity before 1765 would also lead to a pragmatic, 'goal-directed' interest with Indian affairs, one where British observers approached Native Americans as a potential asset rather than a 'bogeyman' to fear, or savage barbarian to ignore.[94] These themes are recurring features in this study, and apply not only to the French and Indian conflict, but also to news coverage of overseas hostilities in general. Public attitudes towards Native Americans, thus, appear more grounded than what loftier, romantic interpretations might suggest, and more responsive to the reality of shifting geo-political and strategic dynamics. Press exposure afforded to Indian violence, and the different issues commentators raised by engaging with that subject, can give an indication of the complexity that lay behind perceptions of Amerindian society.

To suggest, then, that in the years preceding the Seven Years' War there existed a fully defined body of opinion relating to Native Americans is misleading. Although care must be taken not to simplify what was evidently a diverse landscape of social attitudes and intellectual opinion, it is equally clear that by 1754 strong undercurrents of curiosity, conceit, and hostility concerning Amerindians had become prominent features of British public discussion. As Wayne E. Lee argues, certain basic differences were held to be generally true; 'Indians were uncivilised; they did not use or improve all the available land; they were not Christians, and therefore the centuries of rules designed for Christian peoples at war did not apply to them'.[95] The response of news commentators to these and other related issues formed the basis of public reaction to the violence of the French and Indian conflict once reports started to reach British shores from the summer of 1755 onwards.

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[93] Kupperman, Karen O., 'English Perceptions of Treachery, 1583-1640: The Case of the American Savage', *The Historical Journal*, 20 (1977), pp. 263-287. See also James H. Merrell, 'Some Thoughts on Colonial Historians and American Indians', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (1989), pp. 94-119; Bernard Bailyn, 'The Challenge of Modern Historiography', *The American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), pp. 1-24.

[94] Bickham, *Savages Within the Empire*, p. 68. Peter Silver, 'Review', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 67 (2010), pp. 145-154.

[95] Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare 1500-1865* (Oxford, 2011), p. 166.

The East Indies: Oriental Despotism and State Decline

Where Amerindian society attracted the attention of Enlightenment thinkers who used North America to prove their own theories about primitivism and stadial development, the native cultures of India often led to a very different type of response. The previous chapter noted how differences in public engagement were partly a result of the commercial nature of British involvement in the East Indies prior to 1756, and the sort of exposure that activity typically attracted. The earliest English writings on India, such as those collected and published by Richard Hakluyt or Samuel Purchas, were mainly concerned with promoting economic opportunities, to such extent that some believe the term 'merchant guide book' is a better description.[96] Their principal aims were to catalogue potential trade links and to highlight the vast wealth of the sub-continent. Although many works touched upon the more exotic regional characteristics - the wildlife, fauna, and religions - these subjects were all approached primarily from a business perspective, to help English merchants understand the market they were trying to access. Similar motivations would continue well into the eighteenth century. A publication from 1751, for instance, outlined a set of guidelines provided by a merchant to his son who had recently arrived in India, stating that he 'must take care to write in a style as laconic and mercantile as possible, coming directly to the subject matter, without superfluous words (…) avoiding all tart satirical expressions'. The instructions warned against putting any details to paper beyond those concerned with commerce:

> Remember to say as little as possible, either in words or writing, forbearing to animadvert on public transactions, or the conduct of your superiors, for if you do, though your remarks be ever so just, and made in the honesty and integrity of your heart, you will often create yourself enemies, and but very seldom friends.[97]

There was little appetite to provide a broad philosophical appraisal of Mughal society, as comparable studies sought to do with the Amerindian world. Early accounts were

[96] Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 12-18.
[97] *The Magazine of Magazines*, Jan. 1751, p. 57.

professional, plain in language, and free of the moral righteousness that typifies later narratives. Public interest with India centred on business, not intellectual hypotheses.[98]

A further restriction on the focus of public discussion was the fact most publications relating to India relied on information from older French or Dutch works, such as a popular account by Jean Baptise Tavernier, translated into English in 1677.[99] Even the increasing popularity and accessibility of travel literature saw accounts relating to India that were largely a product of Jesuit missionaries, as opposed to socio-political or intellectual commentators. The narrow scope of sources available to contemporary audiences, therefore, combined with the mercantile filter through which India and most British overseas interactions were typically reported, meant public engagement with the sub-continent was somewhat limited prior to the 1750s.[100] Although a Saidian interpretation may apply to British perceptions of India in the nineteenth century - one that emphasised the difference and otherness of eastern culture - earlier interactions were characterised by attempts to make those experiences relatable to the British world by framing the exotic with the familiar.[101] Indeed, news coverage produced from 1754-64 would be largely free of the type of intellectual discourse that emphasised the primitivism of Amerindian society, thanks to the presence of an established and recognisable power in the form of the Mughal Empire.

Compared with Native Americans, the indigenous population of India, though evidently hailing from very different cultures to their British counterparts, were still broadly recognisable in terms of their political history, governing structures, and physical presence as a civilisation. An early account by Edward Terry, for instance, explained how he had lived for two years at the court of 'the great Mogol, (who prides himself very much in his most famous Ancestor Tamberlane) in the description of whose Empire (...) may meet with large Territories, a numerous Court, most populous, pleasant, and rich Provinces'.[102] Descriptions of this sort appear to continue right through to the mid-eighteenth century, such as an account from 1724 describing the 'glory' of the Mughal Empire, or a posthumous work by

[98] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, pp. 12-18; Frances Mannsaker, 'Elegancy and Wildness: Reflections of the East in the Eighteenth Century Imagination', in *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, p. 178; Peter J. Marshall, 'Taming the Exotic: the British and India in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds.), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1990), p. 53.
[99] Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier* (London, 1677).
[100] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, p. 4, pp. 16-17.
[101] Marshall, 'Taming the Exotic', p. 53. See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978).
[102] Edward Terry, *A Voyage to East India* (London, 1655), *preface*

the influential bookseller Nathaniel Crouch, which provided details of the 'mighty monarch' whose revenue was reckoned 'to be about seven million and an half, English money. The Throne alone wherein he gives audience, is valued at near four millions, being almost covered with jewels, pearls, and all kind of precious stones of vast value.'[103] That British traders had still only made tentative inroads into the sub-continent by the 1750s, and only with the express permission of the Emperor, was recognition of the status and authority of Mughal power in contrast with British perceptions of Amerindian nations.[104] This sense of precariousness - that Britons were increasingly conscious of their relative weakness on the world stage - is something Linda Colley has explored in particular detail.[105] As discussed in the previous chapter, the public image of Britain in the early eighteenth century was that of a 'classic' blue-water power - confident in its perceived role as a trading nation, and benefiting from a network of overseas interests, yet conscious of its limitations with respect to other actors in that global arena.[106] Whereas North America represented an anthropological window into the distant past, that was not the case with India. As home to long-established and culturally sophisticated civilisations whose continued influence throughout the region was undeniable, the Mughal Empire demanded a sense of parity when it came to public discussion, not as an abstract concept or philosophical experiment, but as a tangible, socio-political reality. Yet although ideas of primitivism were not as applicable to India, other strands of discourse took on a more prominent role, the most significant being those concerned with the concept of 'eastern' degeneracy and state decline.

The origins of 'oriental despotism' are traceable to earlier narratives from the preceding century. Printed in 1615, the journal of Sir Thomas Roe the first English ambassador to the Mughal Court, testified to the decadency, ostentation, and tyrannical-

[103] La Créquinière, *The Agreement of the Customs of the East-Indians* (London, 1724), p. 3; Nathaniel Crouch, *The English Acquisitions in Guinea and East-India* (London 1728), p. 157. See also Robert Mayer, 'Nathaniel Crouch, Bookseller and Historian: Popular Historiography and Cultural Power in Late Seventeenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 391-419.

[104] This is not to say English colonists did not respect the decisions of Native American leaders regarding trade or territorial disputes. The willingness of settlers and British military leaders to engage in formal negotiations with Indian nations is recognition of Indian strength. However, compared to interactions with a more 'conventional' state, such as the Mughals, Britons were more pre-disposed to ignoring or belittling the perceived authority of Amerindians. See Chapter Four.

[105] Colley, *Captives*, pp. 4-12.

[106] Manke, 'The Languages of Liberty in British North America', pp. 44-48. See also, David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge, 1998).

theatricality of the emperor in Delhi.[107] Correspondence between Roe and the Archbishop of Canterbury, for instance, explained how 'these people have no written Laws, the King's judgement binds; who sits and give sentence once a week with much patience, both in civil and criminal causes, where sometimes he see the execution done by his elephants, with too much delight in blood'. Another dispatch claimed that none could drink wine without leave of the sovereign, yet because of his own frequent intoxication, the emperor often forgot when he did grant permission for others to join him, with dangerous consequences:

> The King not remembering his own command (...) fined some one, some two, and some three thousand roupees; and some that were nearer his person, he caused to be whipped before him, they receiving a hundred and thirty strips with a terrible instrument, having at the ends of four cords, irons like spur-rowels, so that every stroke made four wounds.[108]

These writings would have a lasting influence, with commentator still re-printing excerpts over a century later. The posthumous narrative by Nathaniel Crouch, for instance, spoke of the 'extreme cruelty and torture' that malefactors suffered as punishment for crimes, including being torn to pieces by wild beasts, impaled upon sharp stakes, or crushed to death by elephants.[109] Significantly, however, the author explains how many of the horrific details originate from older accounts, including those obtained during the ambassadorship of Sir Thomas Roe. Again, in 1761 the *Monthly Review* would comment on a new publication that included various extracts from the Roe journal, which 'evinced the splendour of the eastern courts and the arrogance of their monarchs'.[110] Though often clouded by a misinterpretation of the symbolism that underpinned the Mughal court, these early criticisms laid the ground for subsequent works to create a more coherent discourse, one that sought to explore the broader effects of this perceived despotism.[111]

Drawing on his own experience as a visiting physician, Francois Bernier's influential *History of the Great Mogul*, translated into English in 1671, expanded on the idea of a decadent government, driven by luxury and self-aggrandisement, to show how such a

[107] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, p. 20.
[108] 'Extracts from letters sent by Sir Thomas Roe', quoted in Richard Cambridge Owen, *An Account of the War in India* (London, 1761), p. xvii
[109] Crouch, *The English Acquisitions in Guinea and East-India*, pp. 166-167.
[110] *Monthly Review*, Apr. 1761, p. 254
[111] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, p. 20.

system stifled Mughal society as a whole. Of avaricious local governors, for instance, the trepidation was so great that ordinary people were said to be 'in continual fear (...) more than any slave doth of his master', to the extent that most were afraid to engage even in the most basic acts of commerce, 'less they should be thought rich, and fall into the danger of being ruined'.[112] The impact of such tyranny was apparently felt everywhere. Autocratic government meant the rule of law rarely extended beyond the major urban centres even when it did the general levels of violence were so great:

> That it takes away what is necessary to the life of a peasant or tradesman, who is starved for hunger and misery, who gets no children, or if he does, sees them die young for want of food, or that abandons his land, and turns some cavalier's man, or flies whither he may to his neighbours, in hopes of finding a better condition.

Even cultural pursuits suffered in such a climate of desperate self-interest, the arts said to be:

> Languishing in those countries (...) for what heart and spirit can an artisan have to study well, and to apply his mind to his work, when he sees, that among the people, which is for the most part beggarly or will appear so, there is none that consider the goodness and greatness of his work.[113]

Crucially, in the same way that historic accounts of the Mughal court would re-appear in later decades, early works that started to outline the principles of oriental despotism, including those by prominent authors such as Tavernier, Jean de Thévenot and, Pietro Della Valle, had direct influence on commentary printed during the Seven Years' War era.[114]

Even a cursory examination demonstrates the extent to which older images, that present India as a violent, lawless state, had established a firm presence in public discourse

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[112] Francois Bernier, *The History of the Late Revolution of the Empire of the Great Mogol* (London, 1676). pp. 167-168.
[113] Ibid., pp. 170-173.
[114] Franco Venturi, 'Oriental Despotism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (1963); Jean de Thévenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant in Three Parts* (London, 1687); Pietro Della Valle, *Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India: From the Old English Translation of 1664*, edited by Edward Gray (New York, 2010).

by the mid-eighteenth century. A lengthy account published in 1727, and again in 1746 by an aspiring travel writer recounted an earlier dispute between the East India Company and the local ruler of Chickacul, who attempted to seize an English factory near Vizagapatam. A Company agent was captured in the process and 'put to a cruel death', the author describing how:

> He was set in hot scorching sun three days, with his hands fastened to a stake over his head, and one of his legs tied up till his heel touched his buttock, and in, the night, put into a dungeon with some venomous snakes to bear him company, and this was repeated till the third night he ended his miserable life.[115]

This idea of insecurity, that no person or commercial interest was safe from the threat of arbitrary violence or plunder, was a recurring theme. An anonymous letter, printed in 1750, described an invasion by Maratha forces as a 'storm', one that:

> Engrossed the whole care and attention of the company's servants there (...) having entered the province of Arcot, killed the nabob, and defeated his army, they proceeded to the capital which they plundered, and while they stayed there, raised large contributions from the adjacent countries.[116]

A later account from 1757 made similar observations ‘they have given no indication of a commercial turn; on the contrary, where their arms have penetrated, or but their influence extended, they have destroyed all trade and manufactures’.[117] Again, these competing provincial rulers were presented as never forgoing an opportunity for ‘occasions of oppression or plunder, where they have no opposition or vengeance to fear'.[118] The central government was no different. A piece in the *Universal Magazine* in 1757 explained how the power of the Emperor was:

> So despotic that he has the sovereign disposal of the lives and effects of his subjects; his will is their only law; it decides all

[115] Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies* (London, 1746), p. 378.
[116] Anon, *A Letter to a Proprietor of the East India Company* (London, 1750), p. 9.
[117] John Henry Grose, *A Voyage to the East-Indies* (London, 1757), p. 121.
[118] Grose, *Voyage to the East-Indies*, p. 404.

> controversies, without any persons daring to dispute it, on pain of death. At this command alone, the greatest Lords are executed, their seats, their lands, their posts and offices are changes or taken from them.[119]

The message was clear; the sword governed India not rule of law. Conversely, feminised descriptions often served to emphasise the inherent weakness of state actors, rather than portraying outright strength. Mughal soldiers allegedly relied on opium to see them through a battle, yet the effects were surprisingly pitiful:

> It must fill the mind of a European solider at once with compassion and contempt, to see a heap of these poor creatures, solely animated by a momentary intoxication, crowded into a breach, and both in their garb and impotent fury, resembling a mob of frantic women.[120]

The same was apparently true of their appearance, the perceived effeminacy of eastern dress having greatly contributed to 'lessen their military character with the European nations, who, from their own habits and prejudices, will naturally receive a strange impression, upon seeing a body of horse in silk or cotton robes'. Indeed, another account stated that 'eastern people in general are generally more effeminate, and more addicted to pleasures than other nations, and consequently they are less capable of a true and solid virtue.'[121] The outward violence and ostentation of Mughal society, in a sense, belied a more fundamental malaise.

Erotic language further reinforced the notion of immorality and self-obsessed debauchery. These 'princes of the East', as described in *Spirit of Laws*, 'abandoned themselves in their seraglio to the most brutal passions, pursuing in the middle of a prostituted court, the most capricious extravagancies, they could never have dreamt to find matters so easy'.[122] Montesquieu had already encouraged similar views in the highly influential *Persian Letters*, translated into English in 1722. In one letter, the protagonist instructs a servant to keep his five wives secure from the prying eyes of other men:

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[119] *Universal Magazine*, Jun. 1757, p. 267.
[120] Owen, *Account of the War in India*, p. xiv.
[121] La Créquinière, *Agreement of the Customs of the East-Indians*, p. 8.
[122] Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, p. 26.

> Thou art the faithful guardian of the fairest women in Persia. I have trusted with the dearest things in the world. Thou hast in thy hands the keys of those fatal doors, that are never opened but to me (...) but take care that no man comes near them. Exhort them to cleanliness, the image of the purity of soul. Talk frequently of me to them. I long to see them in that charming place which themselves are the greatest ornament.[123]

The growing popularity of oriental literature reinforced this use of sexualised imagery, with English translations of influential works such as *Arabian Night Entertainments* and *Persian and Turkish Tales* including many of the same tropes.[124] Published in 1745, for instance, *Oriental Tales* spoke of a powerful eastern monarch and the 'numberless beauties which he had in his harem, the secret residence of his gentle pleasures, had never made him imagine that it was possible to be subjected to the will of those who were submissive to his'.[125] Such descriptions were not restricted to continental works, but also expressed by British authors. A piece by William Robertson, printed in 1755, explained how:

> Polygamy seems to have been universal among the eastern nations; and men married as many wives as their fancy wished for (...) one half of the human species became the property of the other; and the husband, instead of being the friend and protector of a wife, was no better than the master and tyrant over a slave.[126]

Accounts of this sort appear throughout the period. A narrative from 1757, again, commented how the Mughal emperor maintained a harem of slaves, of which the author thought nothing could be:

> More cruel, or more contrary to the benevolent institutes of nature, than thus sacrificing a number of poor creatures to the caprice and jealousy of one man, who perhaps amidst three or

[123] Baron de Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (London, 1722), pp. 8-10. See also Suzanne Rodin Pucci, 'The Discrete Charms of the Exotic: Fictions of Harem in Eighteenth Century France', in *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, pp. 149-154.
[124] Mannsaker, 'Elegancy and Wildness', pp. 179-184.
[125] Comte de Caylus, *Oriental Tales* (London, 1745), p. 166.
[126] Robertson, *Situation of the World*, p. 11.

> four hundred, nay as far as a thousand and upwards, confines his embraces to a very few of them, whilst the others, in the flower of their age, and with all the violence of the melting passions, inspired and nursed by the heat of the climate, pine away with unsatisfied desires.[127]

As Suzanne Rodin Pucci argues, voyeuristic depictions of 'eastern' female bodies, often referred to in the plural, is a consistent feature of orientalist literature throughout the Enlightenment.[128] Combined, then, with accounts of violent and unstable governance, the repeated use of themes that sought to highlight the decadency and exoticism of eastern culture demonstrates the prominence as well as complexity of 'oriental despotism' as a subject for public dialogue. Compared with North America the extent to which India, more generally, featured as an item of news before the Seven Years' War remained limited. Still, the discursive foundations laid in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, would have profound influence on press coverage and discussion of violence committed in Bengal from 1754-64. Crucially, however, where the professed hierarchal divide between North America and Europe largely took place through the intellectual lens of primitivism, in the case of India it was the opposite.

Presented as having embraced many of the same traits that made Europe a success - organised division of labour, defined class structures, and a commercial economy - India was not a primitive state, but a modern one.[129] It was that perceived equivalence, however, which potentially made the East Indies as significant a topic for intellectual discussion, as the historicism of Amerindian society did. The tyranny and immorality of the Mughal Empire was not a window into the past but a lesson for the present, a demonstration of what could happen to a culturally sophisticated society if debased government and an avaricious attitude towards governance take hold.[130] According to such narratives, sustained periods of despotic rule had created the lawless, near-anarchic conditions repeatedly described in accounts of the Indian sub-continent. A narrative from 1722, for instance, explained that Eastern rulers were frequently cruel, sanguinary and 'devoid of those good qualities which should retain their subjects in their duty'. The result was a population continually inclined to rebellion, for 'who would not endeavour to be delivered

[127] Grose, *Voyage to the East Indies,* p. 217.
[128] Pucci, 'Discrete Charms of the Exotic', p. 154.
[129] Sebastiani, 'Nations, Nationalism, and National Characters', p. 606.
[130] Marshall, 'Taming the Exotic', p. 56; Porter, *Enlightenmen*t, pp. 356-357.

from the tyranny of such princes, who breathe nothing but fire and sword'.[131] The same effects were apparent in China, perceived home of another despotic regime:

> Corruption, luxury, indolence, and pleasures (…) they shut themselves up in a palace, their understanding is impaired; their life is shortened; the family declines; the grandees rise up; the eunuchs gain credit; none but children are set on the throne; the palace becomes an enemy to the empire; a lazy set of fellows that dwell there, ruin the industrious part of the nation.[132]

Such accounts were not theoretical discussions, but warnings all European governments should take heed of, particularly those that sought to trample on the rights and liberty of ordinary people. An essay by David Hume from 1748, for instance, noted how:

> As poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people, and render them unfit for any science and ingenious profession, so where any government becomes very oppressive to all its subjects, it must have a proportional effect on their temper and genius, and must banish all the liberal arts amongst them.[133]

News commentary produced similar observations, a piece in the *Critical Review*, for instance, stated how 'the best European legislator, philosopher, or politician, may receive great instruction (...) and prove the dreadful danger that may accrue to the best regulated country in the world, from the degeneracy, effeminacy, and cowardice, of a court, in cases of foreign invasion'.[134] India, in effect, was living proof of the effects of poor governance.

In the case of earlier sources, the idea that self-obsessed Mughal rulers had led to social stagnation primarily served a satirical purpose. Criticisms expressed in the earlier Bernier narrative, for instance, convey a subtle rebuke of increasing French monarchical power in Europe at that time.[135] Similar instances of introspection were still evident in the mid-eighteenth century, Frances Mannsaker notes how oriental tales such as *Almoran and Hamlet* presented eastern despotism as a lesson in what to avoid for just and virtuous

[131] La Créquinière, *Agreement of the Customs of the East-Indians*, pp. 7-8.
[132] Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, p. 147.
[133] Hume, *Three Essays*, p. 3.
[134] *Critical Review*, Apr. 1763, p. 304.
[135] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, p. 20.

government, the dedication explaining 'the advantages of our excellent constitution in comparison of others (...) the [tale] is intended to recommend the practice of virtue'.[136] Yet the late 1740s would also see commentary that started to consider the effects of oriental despotism in a different light, in terms of the impact on British ambitions within India itself. As simple trade outposts had evolved into major strategic assets, the continued prosperity and security of British settlements like Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were of paramount concern to those who provided coverage of the region.[137] Political stability provided the conditions for economic success, particularly when local rulers were favourably disposed towards British interests. Yet in the decade immediately prior to the Seven Years' War, publications offered an image of civil war and a collapse in central authority, circumstances that potentially threatened commerce and profit.[138]

Accounts printed during what have been called the 'forgotten wars' of 1740–1754 recounted a litany of violent episodes; the sack of Delhi and capitulation of the Mughal Emperor in 1738; the Maratha invasion of Arcot in 1740; the capture of Madras by French forces in 1746; and the proxy conflicts for control of the Carnatic.[139] This is not to say Britons were not participants in or enablers of that instability. Sporadic conflicts with the imperial court and, more frequently, with rival European interests - particularly along the Coromandel Coast - certainly added to the sense of chaos presented in British accounts. A letter printed in the *Whitehall Evening Post*, for instance, spoke of how Anglo-French disputes had led to all manner of 'robberies, cruelties and depredations' which turned the country into a 'scene of blood'.[140] From an internal and historic perspective, it is also wrong to suggest that India descended into total anarchy during this period. A recent study notes how rebellion was an ever-present feature of Mughal society, the imperial government constantly battling or negotiating with potential challengers 'in this fluid, argumentative political world there were few permanent alliances.'[141] Admittedly, the Persian invasion of 1739 did weaken the authority of central government, undermining its ability to manage competing elements within the imperial system, yet the broader structure and prosperity

[136] Mannsaker, 'Elegancy and Wildness', p. 184; John Hawkesworth, *Almoran and Hamlet: An Oriental Tale* (Dublin, 1761), p. vii.
[137] G. J. Bryant, The War in the Carnatic', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), p. 78.
[138] Jon Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos Empire* (London, 2016), p. 60.
[139] Wilson, *India Conquered,* p. 57. See for instance Anon, *A Letter to a Proprietor of the East India Company* (London, 1750), pp 5-6; Anon, *A Genuine Account of Some Transactions in the East Indies* (London, 1753); *London Daily Advertiser*, 13 May 1752.
[140] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 8 Oct. 1747.
[141] Wilson, *India Conquered* (London, 2016), p. 20.

of Mughal society remained intact.[142] Furthermore, in focussing specifically on the European imperial experience, the lens of colonialism can overshadow the complexity of larger historic processes taking place throughout the region at that time.[143] Yet irrespective of reality on the ground in India - something this study is not primarily concerned with - by the outbreak of hostilities in 1756, the overriding image was that of a dysfunctional empire in a fundamental state of decline. As one account summarised, these convulsions were a result of 'the weakness of the present government, which (...) has daily declined. For [the emperor] looks on without saying anything, and bears with the disorders, because it is not in his power to remedy them'.[144] These themes provided a backdrop for much of the public exposure, discussion, and debate that was to follow.

In the decades after the Seven Years' War, the image of a failing state helped to present Company rule in Bengal as a rejuvenating force, something that returned stability to the country and set it on a path from despotism to modernity.[145] As the later chapters of this study demonstrate, however, press engagement during the war itself, specifically relating to acts of violence committed throughout the conflict, reveal a tentative, often uncertain response to British actions in India. Exposure afforded to episodes such as the Black Hole of Calcutta or the Patna Massacre, represent a discursive bridge, one that combined an older fascination with the perceived exoticism of eastern society, with a rapidly emerging and self-assured imperial mentality. Yet within that public dialogue, a mix of traditional mercantile priorities, as well as emerging humanitarian-focussed critiques, resulted in a sceptical, deliberative, but often coldly practical approach to reports of violence in India, one unique to the period and to the fluid nature of that conflict.

To conclude this section, although the perceived otherness of India and North America go some way in explaining the type of news coverage they attracted throughout the Seven Years' War, the hostilities also received as much attention for their apparent contrast with accepted British military norms and practices, rather than because of any prejudices concerning the non-European populations involved. As such, this study considers press reaction to accounts of Amerindian violence, or alleged outrages

[142] Wilson, *India Conquered* (London, 2016), p. 84.
[143] Jon Wilson, 'Early Colonial India beyond Empire', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), pp. 951-970.
[144] Thomas, Jefferys, *Explanation of the Map of the Seat of War* (London, 1754), p. 35.
[145] Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, pp. 111-114. See for instance Robert Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (London, 1773); Luke Scrafton*, Reflections on the Government of Indostan* (London, 1770).

committed by Mughal forces in Bengal throughout the same period, within a broader context of public attitudes towards war and the legality of violence during military conflict. The remainder of the chapter will explore this issue in more detail.

European Military Ideals and Practice circa 1750

The late seventeenth century was revolutionary in terms of wholesale changes that occurred in European military weaponry, tactics, and conventions. By the 1750s, mass production of reliable and increasingly powerful gunpowder-based weapons was prevalent across Europe, with particular models or types becoming standard issue among most armies of the great powers.[146] Due to the inherent limitations of the weapons themselves, however, a broad consensus quickly determined the most effective techniques for utilising the technology. The flintlock musket, for instance, was relatively simple to use but largely inaccurate when fired individually - it was only effective up to a range of 200 yards. The solution, one quickly adopted throughout Europe, was to maximise the volume of fire by arranging soldiers into tightly packed formations and unleashing large volleys from short distances.[147] This sort of operational standardisation is evident in the way European conflicts throughout the period were largely indistinguishable, with military engagements centring on highly choreographed sieges and the use of massed infantry.[148] A publication from as early as 1702, for instance, stated that such tactics were 'suitable to the modern way of exercising both in Britain and France'.[149] Yet where nominalisation of technology brought European armies together in terms of appearance and logistics, synchronisation also led to common ideas concerning military conduct and the nature of war.

Assisted by a so called 'free exchange of ideas', an outpouring of specialised military literature throughout Europe helped to establish something close to a universal image of what to expect from a mid-eighteenth century battlefield.[150] As Mark Danley

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[146] See for instance Jeremy Black, *European Warfare 1650 -1815* (London, 1994), pp. 3-39; Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London, 2001), pp. 32-36; Alan J. Guy, 'The Army of the Georges, 1714-1783', in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 92-112.

[147] Christopher Duffy, *Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (London: 1987), p. 207. Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London, 1983), pp. 16 -17; Black, *European Warfare 1650 -1815*, pp. 40-41; Holmes, *Redcoat*, pp. 32-36.

[148] Duffy, *Military Experience*, p. 313; David G. Chandler, *The Art of Warfare on Land* (London, 2000), p. 103; John Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe 1648-1789* (Manchester, 1982), pp. 101-142.

[149] J.H., *The Compleat Gentleman Soldier* (London, 1702), p. 7.

[150] G. J. Bryant, 'Asymmetric Warfare: The British Experience in Eighteenth century India', *Journal of Military History*, 68 (2004), p. 440; R. Savory, *His Britannic Majesty's Army in Germany during the Seven Years War* (Oxford, 1966), p. vii.

argues, writers and readers of the news press were only able to engage in the day-to-day minutiae of military affairs because of a parallel engagement with the printed texts that informed the 'strategic mindset' of those who engaged in regular warfare.[151] Authored, consumed, and shared by military officers, military pamphlets provided an intellectual framework for approaching and understanding the realities of European conflict. A publication from 1727 highlighted the intricacy and accuracy of movement expected from infantry when positioning themselves to fire, while another from 1760 described in detail the twenty-one motions required to load and fire a musket.[152] Such material, of which there are countless examples, demonstrated to audiences how European warfare was less reliant on so-called 'acts of individual enthusiasm', and more dependent on the routine application of collective process.[153] War was a joint endeavour, defined by cooperation and coordination that incorporated the individual into a wider social unit and cultural identity.[154] Underpinning this process of assimilation, crucially, was the expectation that friend and foe alike would behave accordingly.

The emergence of a distinct officer class throughout Western Europe was fundamental to the idea of a shared military endeavour. Individuals who for the most part came from similar social, economic, and intellectual backgrounds, increasingly recognised one other as 'members of a common fraternity'.[155] Cosmopolitan in nature, European officers stressed the importance of aristocratic values of honour, privilege, and conduct. The result was an 'obsessive concern' with appearance and managing the expectations of what it meant to be a gentleman-officer.[156] Excessive attention afforded to military attire is an illustration of this fixation with the opinion of spectators, both military and non-

[151] Mark H. Danley, The British Political Press and Military Thought during the Seven Years' War, in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), p. 360.
[152] Humphrey Bland, *A Treatise of Military Discipline* (London, 1727), p. 21; George Thompson, *An abstract of General Bland's Treatise of Military Discipline* (London, 1760), p. 17.
[153] Willerd R. Fann, 'On the Infantryman's Age in Eighteenth Century Prussia', *Military Affairs*, 41 (1977), p. 167.
[154] Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, 'Defining Soldiers: Britain's Military, c.1740-1815', *War in History*, 20 (2013), pp. 144-159.
[155] Duffy, *Military Experience*, p. 313.
[156] Bryant, 'Asymmetric Warfare', p. 440; M.S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime: 1618-1789* (London, 1988), p. 189; Alan. J Guy (ed.), *Colonel Samuel Bagshawe and the Army of George II, 1731-1762* (London, 1990), p. 14. Where 'European' conduct is referred to in this study, it should be taken as relating primarily to Western Europe. There were subtle differences in the practices and perceptions of Eastern European counterparts. See Anthony Cross, *Russia under Western Eyes, 1517-1825* (London, 1971); Marian Fussel, '"Feroces et Barbares?" Cossacks, Kalmyks and Russian Irregular Warfare During the Seven Years' War', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. 243-262; Alan. J Guy (ed.), *Colonel Samuel Bagshawe and the Army of George II, 1731-1762* (London, 1990), p. 14.

military.[157] The correspondence of Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Bagshawe, a seemingly stereotypical British officer from the period, show that he took it upon himself to conduct an impromptu regimental inspection on discovering that certain individuals were dressed inappropriately:

> The parade being composed only of the men of your regiment, I thought it my duty as Lieutenant-Colonel to see to it they were dressed in a proper manner to mount guard (…) some of the men mounted in black and some in white rollers and desiring to know whether they should not appear in the same manner as you gave directions for their appearing white rollers.[158]

This type of fastidious behaviour was prevalent throughout Europe by the 1750s, but it represents only a single feature of a much broader set of prescribed attributes. The highly influential *Treatise of Military Discipline*, already into its seventh edition by the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, explained how:

> An officer, who is detached with a body of men, ought to consider, that the lives of those under his command depend in a great measure on his prudence; and if he has any important post committed to his charge, the lives of many more follow. This consideration alone, without mentioning the loss of reputation, is sufficient, in my opinion, to make us apply ourselves to our duty with a more than common zeal, that we may not be ignorant in what relates to our profession, when our King and country has an occasion for our service.[159]

Another publication from 1753 outlined similar views expressed by Frederick II of Prussia, considered the foremost military authority at that time 'the true foundation and groundwork of a good officer is a virtuous irreproachable conduct, not merely superficial, but serving as a guide to all his actions, for nothing can be more contradictory to real valour

[157] See Katrina Navickas, '"That Sash Will Hang You": Political Clothing and Adornment in England, 1780–1840', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), pp. 540-65.
[158] Guy, *Bagshawe and the Army of George II*, pp. 161-162.
[159] Humphrey Bland, *A Treatise of Military Discipline*, Seventh Edition (London, 1753), p. 114.

than an embarrassed conscience.'[160] Again, the conduct and appearance of a soldier was of paramount importance, yet it is the apparent universality of such views, which is of greater importance here. That Frederick was Prussian is irrelevant. British military forces, in particular the officer class, largely identified themselves as members of a transnational community, bound to one another by common values and experience. Indeed, despite overwhelming attention afforded to the role that military conflict played in creating a distinct British national identity, recent studies emphasise a continued sense of European 'consciousness'. Soldiers of different nationalities embraced the same value system, shared in the same experiences, and often fought for states different to their own - the recruitment of mercenaries or pursuit of commissions in the armies of foreign powers were both commonplace. As Conway argues, British military culture remained as much a European institution as an expression of innate Britishness.[161] This sense of reciprocity is crucial in terms of understanding press engagement with overseas military encounters during the Seven Years' War, specifically when they did not conform to that sense of universal expectation.

Press exposure afforded to European military activity more generally reinforced the idea of a collective martial culture. As the previous chapter discussed, news commentators by the 1750s were obsessed with reporting foreign conflicts in copious detail and evaluating the deployments and engagements of British as well non-British forces. Admittedly, press coverage of European military affairs took place through a lens of domestic security concerns - the extent of popular interest with foreign military manoeuvres, in part, dictated and framed by their perceived relationship to Britain and British interests. That said, in the decades leading up to the Seven Years' War, the near identical style and tone of news coverage relating to military affairs - whether they be British, French, Austrian, or that of another power - represents a cohesive perception of the European military world, acknowledged by audiences at large. Whilst recognising the complex relationship between society and the military - popular perceptions of soldiers, for instance, were often very different from that afforded to the officer class - there is clear evidence of a pervasive and largely accepted military culture within Britain throughout the

[160] Geoffrey Symcox (ed.), *War, Diplomacy and Imperialism 1618-1763: Selected documents* (London, 1974), pp. 202-205.
[161] See Stephen Conway, 'The Eighteenth Century British Army as a European Institution', in Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (eds.), *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815* (Liverpool, 2014), pp. 17-38.

period.[162] Of particular relevance to this study, however, is the intellectual framework underpinning that martial consensus and its influence on news output throughout 1754-64. Chief among those is the idea of limitation in war.

Dissemination of literature concerned with military theory, beyond that found in general news coverage, played a crucial role in shaping public attitudes concerning the moral and legal aspects of warfare. By the 1750s, British military conduct - in practice and perception - centred on the idea that military hostilities ought to avoid unnecessary confrontation or chaotic bloodshed.[163] Those able to achieve victory by outmanoeuvring an enemy, rather than engaging in open confrontation, were widely accepted to be the most capable commanders. Campaigns consisting for the most part of large set-piece engagements, and formalised military sieges, were not only the most efficient approaches to war, but considered the best way to minimise loss of human life. The treatment of prisoners, in particular, was fundamental to this idea of an overarching set of rules that sought to limit the violence of war. In the case of a siege, for instance, the defenders of a fort or city would generally expect to receive protection and guarantees under the terms of a mutually negotiated capitulation. The agreement made between French and British forces at Louisbourg in 1745, subsequently reported in the *London Evening Post*, is a typical example:

> I. That if your own vessels shall be found insufficient for the transportation of your persons and effects to France, we will provide such a farther number of vessels as may be sufficient for that purpose
>
> II. That all the commission officers belonging to the garrison and inhabitants of the town, may remain in their houses with their families, and enjoy the free exercise of their religion, and no person shall be suffered to misuse or molest any of them

[162] Linch and McCormack, 'Defining Soldiers', p. 147; Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack, 'Introduction', in Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (eds.), *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815* (Liverpool, 2014), p. 1.

[163] Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, pp. 11-15; Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe* (Manchester, 1982), pp. 101-104.

> III. That all your sick and wounded shall be taken tender care of, in the same manner with our own.[164]

A convention that officers should, where possible, offer generous terms to bring about a swift resolution to military operations, was already a deeply rooted concept by the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. The similarities, for instance, between the surrender of Louisbourg in 1745 and the capitulation that occurred during the siege of Breda in 1625 are clear:

> The governor of the City of Breda together with the colonels, captains, officers and soldiers of foot and horse may leave the city; it is further granted that they may leave in the manner in which soldiers are accustomed to march in ranks and carrying their arms (...) and that no one of them may be arrested or detained for any cause whatsoever.[165]

Established principles governing appropriate military behaviour provided a series of guidelines for British officers - as members of a shared European class - as to their duty for ensuring the wellbeing and security of defeated enemy forces. From tactics used on a battlefield to the treatment of combatants in the aftermath, the idea of restraint permeates the conduct and image of war throughout the period. Before considering the intellectual rational that lay behind such principles, however, attempts to manage or moderate the perceived harshness of war require a degree of context.

If there was limitation in European warfare then it was often not a result of enlightened design or humanitarian intent but the practicalities of technology, resources and management of personnel.[166] The endemic use of flogging and other severe punishments to enforce discipline among soldiers is such an example. The articles issued for horse and foot guards in 1749, for instance, stated that if a soldier was found drunk on duty he 'shall suffer such corporal punishment as shall be inflicted upon him by the sentence of a court martial', if a sentinel was found asleep at his post the punishment was

[164] *London Evening Post*, 23 Jul. 1745, pp. 1-4.
[165] Symcox (ed.) *War, Diplomacy and Imperialism,* pp. 160-163.
[166] Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, pp. 9-15.

death.[167] A similar culture was evident in the Royal Navy, regulations issued in 1747 declaring that officers should be 'vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral, and disorderly practices'.[168] Draconian measures of this sort were an accepted, even required feature of eighteenth century military culture. Brutal discipline was a means of instilling virtuous behaviour in those perceived to have none, so ensuring the cohesion and effectiveness of a fighting unit. A publication by Samuel Bever, a captain in the British Army, collated a series of quotes from renowned military theorists, the first chapter being entirely concerned with the importance of discipline:

> Nothing can be so necessary to the soldier; without it troops may become more dangerous than useful, more hurtful to ourselves than to our enemies: the means of discipline is regulated by our military laws, and by the Articles of War, which command obedience to superiors, courage against an enemy, a conduct (in regard to private conversation) regular and honourable; appointing for that purpose, rewards and punishments due to the different behaviours.[169]

Legitimised brutality to enforce order was seemingly essential for military success. As the trial of Admiral Byng in 1756 would also demonstrate, failure for an officer, particularly one in the navy, could have fatal consequences. Again, as the Royal Navy regulations explained, the captain of a ship may use discretion and prudence to achieve efficiency, but he must remember at all times that 'he is himself responsible for the whole conduct and good government of the ship'.[170] The need for harsh treatment of soldiers and sailors, in part, reflected the pressures that came with holding responsibility for any military loss. Yet despite the practical necessities that might explain attempts made to regulate warfare, legal-moralistic ideals remained an overriding motivation. It is these themes, which are of particular interest to the study.

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[167]Great Britain. Army, *Rules and Articles for the Better Government of His Majesty's Horse and Foot Guards* (London, 1749), p. 18.
[168] Great Britain. Royal Navy, *Regulations and Instructions relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea* (London, 1747), p. 45.
[169] Samuel Bever, *The Cadet. A Military Treatise. By an officer* (London, 1756), p. 1
[170] Great Britain. Royal Navy, *Regulations and Instructions,* p. 43.

Following the wars of religion, and the unprecedented levels of violence experienced throughout the continent, a series of theoretical tracts sought to establish a universal framework for the purpose of governing interactions between the major powers.[171] Barbara Donagan, for instance, has carried out various studies into military codes and conduct throughout the English Civil War, and the reaction to alleged atrocities perpetrated by Catholics and Protestants in Ireland.[172] Drawing on older theological traditions of Natural Law, outlined by Catholic thinkers such as Francisco Suarez and Francisco de Vitoria, *The Rights of War and Peace* published by the prominent theorist Hugo Grotius, was the first major attempt at defining a set of principles by which all state actors could avoid the unnecessary use of force to resolve their disputes. Establishing many of the tenets underpinning modern International Law, Grotius would provide much of the intellectual reasoning that enshrined early concepts of State sovereignty, as well as the principle that governments should refrain from interfering in the domestic affairs of another independent power.[173] Based on the reciprocal interest of avoiding what Hedley Bull has called the 'shared fear of unrestrained violence', Grotian ideals would have a lasting influence on public expectations concerning military conflict.[174]

Revised translations of *Rights of War and Peace* continued to appear in the decades that followed, wih new editions published in 1715 and 1738, and commentators often endorsing the work.[175] A later piece reviewed by the *Monthly Review*, for instance, noted how the author in question 'sometimes makes free' with the materials of others without reference, when he should acknowledge that 'he is beholden to Grotius for (...) the basis of his arguments in the first and ensuing chapters, though he takes no notice of the obligation.'[176] The wider effects, however, are evident in the perceived improvement in wider military conditions by the mid-eighteenth century.[177] An essay printed in 1740 noted:

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[171] See for instance, Richard Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford, 1999); Brendan Kane, 'Introduction: Human Rights and the History of Violence in the Early British Empire', *History*, 99 (2014), pp. 383-402.
[172] Barbara Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War', *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994); Donagan, 'Codes and Conduct in the English Civil War', *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), pp. 1137-1166; Donagan, *War in England, 1642–1649* (Oxford, 2008). See also Micheal O´ Siochru´, 'Atrocity, Codes of Conduct and the Irish in the British Civil Wars, 1641–1653', *Past and Present*, 195 (2007).
[173] A. Claire Cutler, ' The 'Grotian Tradition' in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 17 (1991), pp. 41-65; H. Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London, 1977), pp. 24-27.
[174] Ibid., p. 67
[175] Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace, in Three Books* (London, 1715, 1738).
[176] *Monthly Review*, Mar. 1759, p. 386.
[177] Anderson, *War and Society,* pp. 135-170; Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe*, pp. 23-27.

> Those who see and consider the miserable and direful effects of war, will hardly think, that it is guided and governed by any rules of right or wrong; and are ready to think, mankind are then devolved into a state of merciless and savage nature; but however, war as limited by the rules and practice thereof among civilised nations, is not so terrible, as that which is undertaken by the barbarous and uncivilised.[178]

Even the harsh rules intended for military discipline reflected a desire to keep violence to a minimum:

> No commander shall inflict any punishment upon a seaman, beyond twelve lashes upon his bare back with a cat of nine tails, according to the ancient practice of the sea; but if the fault shall deserve a greater punishment, he is either to apply to the Commander in Chief, or inform the Secretary of the Admiralty (...) in order to the offender's being brought to a court martial.[179]

War and rules governing it, were increasingly held to be 'hermetically sealed areas' that sought to contain and where possible control the perceived violence of European conflict.[180] Yet despite the professed intentions of Natural Law to bridge the perceived divide between different societies, in practice commentators often proved to be highly selective when it came to the universalism underpinning it. This would have profound consequences for press coverage during the Seven Years' War, as British soldiers confronted overseas populations who appeared to hold entirely different attitudes towards warfare and ownership of land.[181]

The influential *Law of Nations* by Emer de Vattel, translated into English in 1759, provides a sense of the intellectual backdrop that framed reports of military violence committed from 1754-1764. Take, for instance, the arguments put forward in respect of prisoners 'on an enemy's submitting and delivering up his arms, we cannot with justice take

[178] Samuel Brewster, *A Treatise of the Laws of England relating to War and Rebellion*, 2nd ed. (London, 1740), p. 30.
[179] Great Britain. Royal Navy, *Regulations and Instructions,* p. 46.
[180] Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe,* p. 141.
[181] Ivison, 'The Nature of Rights and the History of Empire', p. 193; Simmonds, 'Friendship, Imperial Violence and the Law of Nations', pp. 645-647.

away his life. Thus in battle quarter is to be given to those who lay down their arms, and at a siege, a garrison offering to capitulate are never to be refused their lives.' These rules were not only clear, but as Vattel highlighted, widely recognised 'the humanity with which most nations in Europe carry on wars at present, cannot be too much commended'.[182] Commentators throughout the news press acknowledged and discussed the benefits of such an approach to military conflict. A pamphlet published in 1758, which considered the benefits of formal prisoner exchanges, was praised in the *Critical Review* as proposing a stance that 'cannot be too much commended', and in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for proving 'with great perspicuity and strength of reason' that a refusal to engage in such conduct was:

> Altogether inconsistent with the law of nature and nations, and consequently not to be justified by any political advantage that may be supposed to arise from it, any more than the poisoning of sprints, the massacre in cold blood, and other dark methods of destruction, which all civilised nations have upon the same principles, agreed to explode.[183]

Fair treatment of military personnel was of reciprocal benefit to friend and foe alike, but the reasons for doing so were underpinned by values that were held to be universal in nature, 'war has its law as well peace: those laws must be general and permanent; such are best calculated for the happiness of mankind upon the whole'. The pamphlet also demonstrates how coverage afforded to the French and Indian conflict, explored in later chapters, actively fed into and bolstered opinion relating to the perceived morality of European military principles:

> By our breaking the law of war, the enemy may be at liberty to break all the rest; the use of the scalping knife, and the cruelties of cool blood, with every other torture inflicted by the savage, will become allowable; and war be carried on not by men but by monsters.[184]

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[182] Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, Vol. 2 (London, 1759), p. 49.
[183] Anon, *Considerations on the Exchange of Seamen* (London, 1758); *Critical review*, Dec. 1758, p. 512; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1758, p. 624.
[184] Anon, *Considerations on the Exchange of Seamen,* p. 9, pp. 14-15.

Instead, as the earlier pamphlet by Samuel Bever observed, Europeans should rely on their own moral convictions because 'the barbarous nations place their principal advantage in numbers and strong fury; the well disciplined in calm courage'.[185] Adherence to such principles, however, was open to interpretation, and there are various instances throughout the period where commentary expressed in response to a particular situation did not meet the professed standards of military or legal theorists.

The French forces who surrendered at Louisbourg in 1758 did not receive the same degree of military honours as typically followed a siege. A lack of significant outcry in response to that and other decisions taken during the Seven Years' War, such as the Acadian expulsion in 1756 or the deliberate spread of smallpox by British forces among Amerindians in 1763, represented a loose respect for established military doctrine at best.[186] A publication later attributed to Horace Walpole, considered the harsh treatment of those imprisoned or convicted of a crime more generally, and suggested the extent of British compassion in respect of this issue 'may depend upon our own turn of thought, the objects of it are fixed without an choice of our own by the place we inhabit.'[187] Put another way, the history and laws of individual nations had a direct influence on what should constitute fair and humane treatment:

> We suffer the manners of our country, or the familiarity of the object to numb our sensibility; change but the scene of actions or bring a circumstance quite new to us and humanity immediately recovers all its feeling (...) We English who cannot think without shuddering on the red-hot pincers and the melted lead at the *Greve*, would be reconciled to them upon Tower-Hill, as soon as the rough points of novelty came to be a little rounded off by use,

[185] Bever, *The Cadet,* p. 2.
[186] Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 17-18; Erica M. Charters, 'Military Medicine and the Ethics of War: British Colonial Warfare during the Seven Years War (1756-63)', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History*, 27 (2010), pp. 273-98; Elizabeth A. Fenn, 'Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst', *Journal of American History*, 86 (2000), pp. 1552-1580.
[187] Horace Walpole, *Reflections on the Different Ideas of the French and English in regard to Cruelty* (London, 1759); pp. 7-11.

> and we had time enough to tell one another, that what we saw done was done by law.[188]

Vattel also touched upon this notion of individual perspective, observing that 'acts of hostility vary according to their circumstances. What is just and perfectly innocent in a war, in one particular situation, is not always so in another'.[189] As Adam Ferguson would later note, the means of achieving military honour were very different in Amerindian society, for 'their method of making war is by ambuscade; and they strive, by over-reaching an enemy, to commit the greatest slaughter, or to make the greatest number of prisoners, with the least hazard to themselves. They deem it a folly to expose their own persons in assaulting an enemy.'[190] Context and culture, therefore, were central to the reason why nations must 'conform to general rules' when it came to war, to avoid the fundamental differences of opinion that could easily arise. Such pragmatism demonstrates how the notion of 'ethical universalism' was not always seen to be the result of some innate concept or fundamental principles, as many intellectual debates during the Enlightenment show.[191]

This sense of interpretability concerning the issue of military violence could also lead to more extreme conclusions. A publication from 1759 by Richard Lee, a barrister who wrote a lengthy treatise exploring the treaties of captures during wartime, offered a number of contentious views concerning the rights of combatants to prosecute a conflict entirely as they saw fit. Defining war as a contest of force, the author drew upon ideas of Natural Law, and the works of earlier legal theorists, to argue:

> Every kind of force is just in war: and is therefore just, because it is lawful to take [the opponent] at any disadvantage; such as when he disarmed; to destroy him with poison; to assault him with artillery and fire arms, when he perhaps has no such weapons; and in a word to destroy him by every methods in our power.[192]

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[188] Walpole, *Reflections on the Different Ideas*, p. 11. An earlier edition of the pamphlet was reviewed in the *Universal Magazine*, Nov. 1758, p. 160.
[189] Vattel, *Law of Nations,* Vol. 2, p. 48.
[190] Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 138.
[191] See for instance David Alvarez, 'Difference and Enlightenment Violence: Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson', *The Eighteenth Century*, 53 (2012), pp. 113-118; Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge, 2006).
[192] Richard Lee, *A Treatise on Captures in War* (London, 1759), pp. 5-6.

According to Lee, reason dicated that all actions, including violent ones, were lawful where an enemy was involved, 'we have a right to seek the destruction of him, and everything belonging to him, and as this is the end and design of our appearing in arms what matters it by what means we attain that end.' Significantly, this harsh outlook extended to the treatment of prisoners where 'the conqueror can do what he please with the vanquished (...) and though the practice of killing captives is now disused amongst all who call themselves civilised nations, that it is not used is generally attributed to the will and clemency of the conqueror, who may yet exercise that power'.[193] In contrast, a review in the *Gentleman's Magazine* highlighted the questionable extremes of these arguments. Both criticised the author for extending the law of war 'to unjustifiable breaches of humanity', and arguing that if it was lawful 'to attack a human enemy as we do rats, by poison', so may it also allow for 'the massacre of prisoners of prisoners in cold blood.'[194] Similar remarks appear in the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*, the former exclaiming that:

> However plausible these sentiments may seem, when stripped of their sophistry and refinement, they will perhaps appear to be very unsatisfactory and inconclusive. We may have the *power* to use all kinds of force against an enemy, but we have a *right* only to use just force. All force is unjust, which is exercised against those who make no resistance.[195]

Differing perspectives and specific circumstances might lead to an occasional bending of the rules, but the general notion that any soldier, and in particular any officer, could expect to be reasonably treated in the aftermath of a military engagement was largely promoted, and recognised by news commentators throughout Western Europe. As Vattel argued, combatants in previous centuries 'observed no manner of decorum; they were filled with the most brutal outrages (...) let us congratulate our age on the superior gentleness of its manners, and not decry, as an empty politeness, customs which have consequences truly substantial.'[196] This broad acceptance and proliferation of 'enlightened' military ideals could be described as a zeitgeist of sorts, a way of perceiving and evaluating matters relating to

[193] Lee, *A Treatise on Captures*, p. 55.
[194] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1759, p. 135.
[195] *Monthly Review*, Mar. 1759, p. 388; *Critical Review*, Mar. 1759, p. 265.
[196] Vattel, *Law of Nations,* Vol. 2, p. 25.

war, but it was also held up as a symbol of status, a recognition of moral superiority and civil progress.

The public image of war, in terms of the mutually respected values underpinning its conduct and who should be involved, had created a widely embraced paradigm by the early 1750s, of which the news press was an integral component. Yet as British forces arrived in North America during the spring of 1755, many in the news press would portray an enemy and type of warfare that seemed to fall well outside of that established military convention. As Peter Way stated, 'the land they marched into (...) a veritable "wilderness", the Indians they encountered truly "savage", and the fighting that erupted horrible beyond their ken; it was a new world of warfare.'[197] The willingness of commentators to latch on to and accentuate that disparity would set the overseas conflict which followed apart, as a fundamentally different type of conflict, something that appeared to challenge everything associated with and accepted as the European approach to war.[198] In parallel with the North American hostilities, the eastern theatre of the Seven Years' War would produce a similar type of public discussion. Faced with brutal acts of violence, seemingly committed at the instigation of corrupt, oriental despots, news coverage of the conflict in Bengal would highlight various instances where British forces experienced situations that might not be expected from, or tolerated in, a typical European confrontation.

The apparent juxtaposition of accepted European military convention with the brutal realities of overseas warfare makes press coverage of violent episodes committed during the Seven Years' War an interesting subject to explore. Public engagement with violent incidents such as the Black Hole affair or the Massacre at Fort William, as well as the global conflict those events were set against, would take place within this polarised framework of perceived socio-legal values. Newfound attention afforded to the so-called 'Indian method of war', for instance, which over the course of the North American conflict would be practiced by the indigenous *and* European population alike, was integral to the process by which those hostilities would be marked out as important news events in their own right. The threat, use, and fear 'of carrying on war in small parties, by stolen marches,

[197] Peter Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War' in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and others: British Encounters with indigenous peoples, 1600-1850*, (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 129. See also J. E. Ferling, *A Wilderness of Misery: War and Warriors in Early America* (Westport, Conn., 1980).

[198] Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America (*Oxford, 2006), p. xi; Tony Hayter, 'The Army and the First British Empire 1714-1783', in David Chandler, Ian Beckett (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 117-118.

unexpected attacks upon our sparse defenceless plantations, and suddenly retreating through woods impassable by our people', became a vehicle for expressing concern relating to a host of perceived threats, from Native Americans, to the French, to even the British colonists themselves.[199] As a recent study of violence committed by British forces during the American Revolutionary War, shows the bodily suffering of victims functioned 'as a catalyst for local, sectionalist, national and eventually Anglo-American memory making'.[200] The same can be said of violent transactions reported during the Seven Years' War, their representation and manipulation in print, in effect, used to establish a series of narratives. Yet as shown throughout this study, the complexity of those public discussions, in part shaped by the rapidly evolving situation on the ground, would also create opportunities for debate relating to a variety of issues.

The remainder of this study will show how exposure afforded to sensational acts of violence committed in India and North America throughout 1754-64, what Wayne E. Lee refers to as 'frightful' and Ian Haywood as 'spectacular' violence provided a platform for fluid and complex public dialogue.[201] Crucially, those reactions reveal the itinerant, multifaceted, and often contradictory temperament of popular debate at that time: Were indigenous populations brutal others or noble savages? Should enlightened approaches to military conflict be considered universal or restricted to the European stage? Was overseas expansion a benefit or danger for Britain? These are questions more typically associated with, and explored from, a post-1764 perspective. The complexity and what might be argued flexibility of public discussion during the Seven Years' War, meant news commentary that focused on the violent nature of overseas warfare, though influenced by entrenched social anxieties and historical prejudices, existed in a state of flux, evolving as the dispute between the European powers escalated into a series of unpredictable global confrontations.

[199] Anon, *The Expediency of Securing our American Colonies* (Edinburgh, 1763), p. 60.
[200] Holger Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies: Atrocity in the American Revolutionary War', *Past & Present*, 230 (2016), p. 159.
[201] Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, pp. 3-5; Ian Haywood, *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation, 1776-1832* (New York, 2006), pp. 3-8.

SECTION TWO

NORTH AMERICA: THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, 1754-64

CHAPTER THREE

MONONGAHELA, MILITARY CONVENTION, AND THE DUALITY OF VIOLENCE

The personal experience for British troops fighting in North America from 1754-64 was often characterised by misjudgement, shock, and vulnerability. From the arrival of General Braddock in 1755 through to the defeat of Pontiac in 1764, Britain would endure a string of military setbacks at the hands of France and her Native American allies. British press coverage throughout the hostilities, collectively referred to as the French and Indian War, included news of hostile encounters at Monongahela (1755), Oswego (1756), Fort William Henry (1757), Fort Loudon (1760), Bushy Run (1763), as well as a host of sensational accounts of atrocities committed against the English back settlements. Although each incident represented a distinct set of circumstances, the use of extreme physical violence against British forces was a common feature. Previous studies including those by Matthew Ward, Wayne E. Lee, and Stephen Brumwell consider these episodes from the perspective of those soldiers upon whom it had direct impact, or in terms of the development of wider British military culture.[1] The manner in which these violent encounters also became a subject of extensive public discussion within Britain itself, however, has received comparatively limited attention, or only as part of a broader analysis.[2] This chapter attempts to bridge that gap in existing historiography.

The response of British soldiers - professionally trained and experienced in European military doctrine - to the French and Indian conflict was a prominent subject of public discussion throughout 1754-64. Crucially, for a domestic news press that was largely unaccustomed to reporting or evaluating the visceral realities of North American warfare, the conflict would stimulate a level of discursive engagement that was far more complex

[1] Matthew Ward, '"The European Method of Warring Is Not Practiced Here": The Failure of British Military Policy in the Ohio Valley, 1755-1759', *War in History*, 4 (1997); Peter Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War', in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600-1850* (London, 1999); pp. 123-148; Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge, 2001); Wayne E. Lee*, Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865* (New York, 2011), pp. 135-141.

[2] Existing studies in this area tend to consider the impact of the French and Indian conflict from a colonial perspective. See for instance Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008). Exploration of the popular impact within Britain is more limited, see David Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press 1720-1763'' in Stephen Taylor, Richard Connors, Clyve Jones (eds.), *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 65-81; Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 2; Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2003), pp. 137-227; John Cardwell, *Arts and Arms: Literature, Politics and Patriotism during the Seven Years War* (Manchester, 2004).

than simply a manifestation of anti-Indian sentiment or fear of the 'other'. Deep-rooted socio-intellectual attitudes concerning the nature of military conflict, combined with ongoing reactions to the wider Seven Years' War, influenced how commentators responded to the North American theatre. Yet although external factors and political manoeuvring lead to predictable, even understandable responses, coverage of violent encounters between British and Amerindian forces displayed remarkable plurality in terms of the fluid public discourse generated as a result.

Exploring a selection of violent incidents reported during the French and Indian War, this chapter considers the flexibility with which British commentators presented certain actions as anathema to the established principles of European military virtue but conversely were often able to rationalise those circumstances as having taken place within the parameters of an accepted military paradigm. Such expediency is evident in the way a specific act of violence could be simultaneously condemned, overlooked, or condoned by news reports, often without any sense of contradiction.[3] This duality of opinion, where conflicting interpretations of martial ideals were able to exist alongside one another, opened up broader avenues of discussion concerning the perceived idea of Amerindian primitivism and applicability of British military values in an overseas context. The result was a surprising degree of conciliation towards the indigenous population as well as their use of violent, irregular warfare, and represented the beginnings of an emerging debate over the purpose and wisdom of British expansion overseas.

'A New Species of Warfare'

Press coverage afforded to the Ohio expedition of 1755, the first British campaign of the French and Indian conflict, demonstrates how complex the portrayal and interpretation of overseas military violence during this period could be. As the first operation of its kind in North America, in terms of size and use of regular troops deployed from Britain, the Braddock Expedition - named after its commanding officer, Major General Edward Braddock - was an ongoing subject of interest for the news press. The unexpected and calamitous defeat of British forces at Monongahela in July 1755, however, accentuated by the diplomatic repercussions that followed, amplified public fascination with the American

[3] Eliga H. Gould highlights similar contradictions relating to British attitudes towards legal peripheries, 'with people condoning or sanctioning behaviour at a distance, that they would have found intolerable on their own doorsteps'. See Gould, 'Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (2003), p. 509.

conflict and what appeared to be its shockingly violent nature. News commentators would engage in extensive analysis of the disaster for the duration of the war, the loss becoming something of a 'benchmark' by which similar incidents were compared.[4] After the Battle of Bushy Run in 1763, for instance, the *Annual Register* reported how British troops 'saw before them the most melancholy prospect of crumbling away by degrees, and entirely perishing without honour (...) the fate of Braddock was every moment before their eyes'.[5] An account in the *London Magazine* expressed similar remarks, describing how the violent nature of Monongahela had 'infected' the other British divisions in America with the same sense of terror.[6] How this engagement was presented in the news press, therefore, as well as the 'new species of warfare' that it came to embody, makes it an ideal tool for exploring public opinion with regards to the use of violence against British forces stationed overseas.[7]

At the start of the campaign, over one hundred miles of dense, uncharted woodland separated the British expeditionary force from its objective, Fort Duquense - a French outpost situated on the forks of Monongahela River. Braddock's insistence, however, on undertaking a European-style enterprise meant his army needed to forge a path through this wild backcountry, felling trees as it progressed so the troops, artillery, and supply train could advance as a single, albeit highly-cumbersome military column. The difficulty of such an undertaking epitomised what Fred Anderson describes as the short sightedness of 'men studying maps in London', an ignorance of American affairs also shared by much of the initial commentary relating to the campaign.[8] This apparent credulity would play an important role in shaping later responses to the violence that followed.

A clear sense of optimism as to the expected success of British arms is discernible throughout early press reports. Both the *Scots Magazine* and *Universal Magazine* outlined the extensive finances set aside by Parliament to fund the American campaign, as well as details of the experienced officers that would lead it.[9] In July 1755, the *Gentleman's Magazine* printed an enthusiastic address made by the governor of Virginia who had declared 'that if properly supported, the designs of our enemies will probably be defeated,

[4] Stephen Brumwell, 'A Service Truly Critical: The British Army and Warfare with the North American Indians, 1755-1764, *War in History*, 5 (1998), p. 150.
[5] *Annual Register of the Year 1763* (London, 1764), p. 29.
[6] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, p. 531.
[7] Anon, *An Appeal to the Sense of the People* (London, 1756), pp. 48-50.
[8] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* (London, 2001), p. 88.
[9] *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1754, pp. 545-547; *Universal Magazine*, May 1755, pp. 236-240.

and the peace and safety of our country established on the most permanent foundations'.[10] A seperate article in the same edition provided a full breakdown of all the provincial forces available to Britain in North America, and argued that such vast resources gave it an overwhelming strategic advantage. An account printed in the *London Evening Post* remarked that although the troops would face a difficult terrain and enemy, they should be 'sufficiently able to encounter with either, as they are a good body of men in all respects and in high spirits'.[11] As an anonymous author would later claim, the Ohio expedition was 'more amply provided for by the Government than any expedition of so small a number ever had before'.[12] Although positive or jingoistic commentary of this sort would often appear at the outset of a military campaign, taken as a whole the coverage is significant for the underlying naivety it reveals on the part of news commentators in terms of what to expect from an American conflict.

Once underway the British news press closely followed the progress of the Braddock campaign. The *London Evening Post*, for instance, printed an enthusiastic dispatch in early August, which stated that Braddock had crossed the Allegany Mountains and was within five days march of the French outpost. [13] Yet only two weeks later news reached Britain that shattered the buoyancy of those initial reports; a violent ambush near the forks of the Monongahela River had destroyed the entire expeditionary force.[14] A small force of Canadian rangers and Native American scouts, who had taken up concealed positions, surprised an advanced guard of the British column as they approached the outskirts of Fort Duquesne and poured fire down upon the massed troops. Falling back in disarray, the soldiers collided with the remainder of the column, which had moved forward to provide support. The confused, densely packed British formations proved an easy target, and following hours of intense fighting the entire column collapsed, with Braddock fatally wounded. The remnant of the expeditionary force retreated to Philadelphia having suffered close to 900 casualties killed or wounded, just under half the total number that had originally set out from Maryland. [15]

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[10] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1755, pp. 304-306, p. 327.
[11] *London Evening Post*, 3 Jul. 1755.
[12] Stanley Pargellis (ed.), *Military affairs in North America, 1748-1765: Selected Documents from the Cumberland papers in Windsor Castle* (Pittsburgh, 1936), p. 124.
[13] *London Evening Post*, 9 Aug. 1755.
[14] *Public Advertiser*, 27 Aug. 1755.
[15] For a summary of studies that consider Monongahela from a military perspective see, Brumwell, 'A Service Truly Critical', p. 148.

The defeat at Monongahela was severe but also completely unexpected, the prevailing sense of shock expressed by the *Gentleman's Magazine,* whose editors remarked:

> It was expected that the next advices would give an account of (...) the capture of Fort Duquesne, as everyone had been taught to believe, that our force in this part world was so much superior to the French, that to march and take possession was the same thing; but in the midst of this impatience and confidence, we were alarmed with a report that Gen. Braddock had been defeated'.[16]

As further details emerged, however, news commentary quickly shifted to emphasising not only the scale of the disaster, but also the unusually violent nature of the event itself. Newspapers reported that Braddock had been 'totally defeated', suffering up to 'sixty officers killed and wounded, 800 soldiers killed upon the spot, with cannon, tents, baggage, provisions and private papers, all taken'.[17] The intensity of the fighting was repeatedly emphasised. Reports noted how the general had five horses killed from under him before he too received a shot to the chest, wounds he died from a few days later. One account stated that a sudden fire from the woods had 'put the troops into great confusion and occasioned their retiring with great precipitation; notwithstanding all the endeavours of the General, and the officers'. Another article reported that heavy causalities had been inflicted through the troops mistakenly firing on their own officers, and that 'a full account of this action would disclose such a scene as was never seen before in our, or perhaps in any other army'. Some commentators blamed the use of 'cowardly Irish' soldiers, who supposedly had instigated a panic-stricken rout, whilst other reports cited a lack of discipline on the part of the colonial militia.[18] The *Universal Magazine* claimed that before his death Braddock had allegedly stated that 'never did Officers behave better, nor private men worse (...) had these two regiments stood their ground it would very probably have put an end to the contest in America.'[19] Regardless as to what the exact reasons were for the defeat, the prevailing picture of the event itself was one of outright chaos.

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[16] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1755, pp. 378-379.
[17] Ibid.; *London Evening Post*, 23, 26 Aug. 1755.
[18] *London Evening Post*, 23, 26 Aug., 9, 30 Sept. 1755.
[19] *Universal Magazine*, Aug. 1755, p. 94.

The sense that Monongahela had been a scene of violent confusion was reinforced by analysis that reported fleeing British soldiers to have been full of 'consternation and terror', and believing the enemy to be at their heels 'the panic became general and to complete our misfortune, all the cannon were spiked, to prevent their being of use to the enemy. Eighty guineas apiece were offered to any two men who would fetch off the general's body, but none would attempt it'. [20] In October 1755 an account reputedly written by a British officer who had been present at the battle, confirmed this image of violent disorder:

> We were, on a sudden, charged by shot from the woods. Every man was alert, did all we could, but the men dropped like leaves in Autumn, all was confusion (…) I was wounded in one leg, and in the other heel, so could not go, but sat down at the foot of a tree, praying of everyone one that run by, that they would help me; an American Virginian turned to me, "yes countryman", say he, "I will put you of your misery, these dogs shall not burn you", he then levelled his piece at my head, I cried out and dodged him behind the tree, the piece went off and missed me, and he run on; soon after Lieutenant Grey got me carried off.[21]

The conduct of the soldiers came under particular scrutiny. One account noted how the two British regiments were extremely 'dissatisfied' since arriving in Virginia, 'the officers observing this discontent, treated them with a severity that greatly increased it, so that (...) our late loss was nothing more than the effect of a mutiny.'[22] Similar comments deriding their effectiveness appeared in another pamphlet, which remarked how they had fallen into the enemy trap as ‘prey into their hands’, and even if more troops had been available, it ‘would only have given occasion for a more horrible slaughter.’ Describing the Indians as having made a ‘sad havoc of our men’, the author summed up the violence of the incident in equally provocative terms, stating that ‘perhaps all circumstances considered, history will scarce furnish an instance of such a dreadful carnage’.[23] Another account described how 'so great was the consternation of the soldiers, that it was impossible to stop their career,

[20] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sep. 1755, p. 426.
[21] Anon, *The Expedition of Major General Braddock to Virginia* (London, 1755), pp. 28-29. Excerpts also appeared *Monthly Review,* Oct. 1755, p. 305; *Public Advertiser*, 7 Oct. 1755.
[22] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 426.
[23] Charles Chauncy*, A Letter to a Friend* (London, 1755), pp. 6-7, p. 16.

flying with the utmost precipitation three miles from the field of action'.[24] Taken as a whole these initial reports present an image of a violent and bloody fiasco, wholly atypical in terms of how a conventional battle should be conducted, even in the case of a defeat.

As already discussed, European battles were organised affairs, ostensibly, that followed predictable and clearly understood rules of engagement. Usually under the auspices of negotiated terms, the expectation was that a defeated army would retire from a battlefield in an orderly fashion, not flee the scene in a blind panic as had apparently occurred at Monongahela. The British news press quickly drew attention to this disparity as illustrated in a poem printed by the *Scots Magazine*, 'beneath some Indian shrub if chance you spy, the brave remains of murdered Braddock lie. Soldiers with shame the guilty place survey, and weep, that here your comrades fled away.'[25] A widely re-produced pamphlet by the satirist John Shebbeare compared the apparent 'disgraceful' display of British military discipline with the Battle of Preston Pans in 1745, where British forces had apparently fled in similar chaotic fashion after their defeat to the Jacobites.[26] Again, these sentiments were shared by Horace Walpole in a letter to his uncle, the diplomat Horace Mann, writing 'in short our American laurels are strangely blighted'.[27] Correspondence between Vice Admiral Watson and Lord Holderness, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, expressed similar views, the latter exclaiming how he was 'too much loaded with European and American business to give attention to any other'. Significantly, Holderness also enclosed a copy of the *London Gazette,* which provided details of Monongahela along with a supplementary note describing the news as a 'fatal miscarriage' on the part of Braddock.[28] Such remarks provide an indication of the impact and shock which news of the defeat had caused in terms of transmission throughout the press.

Even the setting in which the battle had taken place was portrayed as fundamentally at odds with European military expectations. As an account from one eyewitness remarked, ‘we have nothing round us but trees, swamps and thickets. I cannot conceive how war can be made in such a country’. He then went on to provide an illustration of some of the more

[24] William Smith, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America* (London, 1757), p. 39.
[25] *Scots Magazine,* Aug. 1755, p. 395.
[26] John Shebbeare, *A Letter to the People of England on the Present Situation and Conduct of National Affairs* (London, 1755), p. 46.
[27]'Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 28 Aug. 1755', *Horace Walpole Correspondence* vol. 20, Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, p. 495.
[28] 'Holdernesse to Watson', 11 Oct. 1755, *Charles Watson Papers*, British Library

gruesome aspects of the campaign, referring to the thick swamps they had marched through that was filled with venomous snakes and:

> A kind of tick or, forest bug, that gets into the legs, and inflammations and ulcers, so that the wound itches and makes one ready to tear off the flesh (…) a soldier of our company was forced to have his leg cut off, for the inflammation caused by the many bites was mortifying.[29]

Despite the *Monthly Review* stating such accounts to be 'a vile misrepresentation of everything that the worthless, unknown scribbler undertakes to describe', the emphasis placed on the exotic environment, the otherworldly combatants, and the high number of causalities all helped to accentuate the peculiarity and sensationalism of the Ohio defeat as a news event. The rapid deterioration in Anglo-French relations that followed further amplified the effect.[30] Even Braddock, who in spite of his alleged arrogance and over-confidence, was later reported to have said before his departure for Virginia that they were being 'sent like sacrifices to the altar', having been asked to 'cut their way through unknown woods' and conquer an entire nation with only a handful of troops.[31] As discussed in the previous chapter, Europe was the standard that British news writers measured non-European societies against, including their warfare. Confronted with the stark realities of a North American battlefield, it is perhaps unsurprising that Monongahela generated such public interest. Reports describing the use of violent and seemingly cruel guerrilla tactics appeared to lie in stark contrast with everything Britons considered acceptable and conventional.[32]

Shaped by long standing belief structures and cultural practices, the Indian approach to war centred on providing individuals with an opportunity to display their strength, bravery, and status over potential rivals. Described as a parallel war, focussed on 'personal goals rather than national interests', the use of large forces was rare, with a preference for smaller raids against lightly defended targets such as an isolated hamlet or

[29] Anon, *Expedition of Major General Braddock*, p. 16.
[30] *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1755, p. 306; *Scots Magazine*, Oct. 1755, pp. 481-482. The French Court publically denounced the Braddock campaign, and attempts made by the Royal Navy to intercept French shipping en route to Canada, accusing Britain of wishing 'to make themselves masters of all Canada, thereby to pave their way to the universal empire of America'. Formal hostilities were declared the following year in May 1756.
[31] Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe: France and England in North America*, Vol. 1 (London, 1899), pp. 197-198.
[32] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', p. 74.

convoy. Characterised by the deliberate use of extreme physical violence, the acquisition of scalps and captives for trade, adoption, or to settle blood feuds, meant Indian warfare could be highly invasive and personable.[33] Existing studies, particularly the military-focussed variety, have explored the impact of Amerindian tactics in shaping the overall nature of the French and Indian conflict. Peter Way argues that war in America forced the British into adopting, as well as condoning, many of the irregular fighting methods used by their Native American allies and foes, such as the promotion of bounties for scalps. Peter Russell, instead, saw the conflict as a vindication of European warfare and the logistics underpinning it, arguing that British military strategy adapted quickly to the asymmetric conditions of the North America theatre. By contrast, Matthew Ward sees the repeated failure of British operations in the Ohio Valley as proof of the effectiveness of Native American guerrilla tactics in preventing the projection of British military power beyond the colonial frontier. Indeed, the creation of an Indian Reserve in 1763 is recognition of Britain's inability to deal with the Native American threat through force of arms alone.[34] As the first major engagement of the war, however, Monongahela was different. Admittedly, the extent to which British military strategists were already familiar with irregular warfare has long been a prominent debate among military historians.[35] Yet in terms of the broader public reaction, it is clear that Monongahela was shocking enough that commentators repeatedly chose to focus on what they saw as its unusually violent nature.

A poem printed in the April 1756 edition of the *London Magazine*, described Monongahela as the 'reeking banks, yet moist with British blood (...) where the snare by fraudful hands was spread'.[36] These were not honourable actions but dishonest, derided as 'Canada's coward arts', in which 'ruthless savages, the destined prey, who wildly fierce each prostrate coarse deride, and with fell shouts the reeking scalp divide'. Another poem

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[33] Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield*, (Massachusetts, 2003), p. 2. Ian Steele, *Setting All the Captives Free: Capture, Adjustment, and Recollection in Allegheny Country* (Montreal, 2013), p. 8; Wayne E. Lee, 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800', *Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007); Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. 78.

[34] Peter Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture: British Soldiers Encounter Native Americans in the French and Indian War' in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds.), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600 – 1850* (London, 1999), pp. 123-148; Peter E. Russell, 'Redcoats in the Wilderness: British Officers and Irregular Warfare in Europe and America, 1740 to 1760', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (1978), pp. 629-652; Ward, 'The European Method of Warring Is Not Practiced Here', pp. 249-250.

[35] Nicholas Darnell, 'British Newspaper Accounts of Braddock's Defeat', *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, (1899), pp. 1-25; Stanley Pargellis, 'Braddock's Defeat', *The American Historical Review*, 41 (1936), pp. 253-269;Frank A. Cassell, 'The Braddock Expedition of 1755: Catastrophe in the Wilderness', *Pennsylvania Legacies*, 5 (2005), pp. 11-15.

[36] *London Magazine*, Apr. 1756, p. 189.

printed by the *Scots Magazine* expressed similar sentiments, speaking of 'mangled limbs' bestrewing a battlefield, left exposed to the 'savage rage' of the Indians.[37] Indeed, the violence reported here is not only an atypical physical act, but also a perceived moral failing. By engaging from concealed positions and not respecting the right of British soldiers to withdraw from the battlefield - attacking and scalping the stragglers - the French and their Amerindian allies are described as cowards, perfidious, dishonourable. This was not behaviour expected of a 'civilised' military encounter, or of a virtuous individual. Indeed, as later chapters explore, these same themes are also evident in coverage afforded to the war in Bengal taking place in parallel. The affair in terms of its presentation in public became less a battle in the traditional sense and more an incident where something distinctly untoward had taken place, as a sermon delivered by prominent theologian Samuel Davies, and re-printed in Britain as a pamphlet, encapsulated:

> We hear the sound of the trumpet, and see garments rolled in blood. We have received the melancholy confirmation of the news were so unwilling to believe, concerning the fate of a great part of our army. Our brave general is no more; near fifty of our best officers, and near six hundred of our men are killed or wounded; an army of one thousand three hundred men routed; and all this, (Oh the indignant mortification!) all this by four or five hundred undisciplined, cowardly, insidious savages. Who can so much as in thought, take a survey of the bloody field, without all the tender and mournful passions working within him? How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! Ye banks of Monongahela, upon you let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, nor fields of offerings: For there the shield of the might is vilely cast away. See there the mighty dead rolling in their own blood! Some of them scalped by merciless Indians, left without the honour of burial in a howling wilderness, to be devoured by the souls of heaven, and beasts of prey. See the wounded

[37] *Scots Magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 488.

> writhing with pain, surrounded with all the terrors of death, and groaning out their life in amazement and consternation.[38]

Yet in spite of these violent incongruities, press coverage also revealed a willingness on the part of news commentators to scrutinise the engagement with similar criticality as afforded to any military occurrence, particularly when it came to the apparent skill of the enemy forces.

The August 1755 edition of *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how the Indians, 'having gained very particular intelligence of Gen. Braddock's design, of the number and condition of his forces (…) entrenched themselves in masterly manner, having a thick wood on each side of them'.[39] At the appropriate moment, they were said to have risen from their concealed positions and attacked from all sides with 'incredible execution.' The analysis continued the following month with a more detailed explanation of their fighting style. With a preference for ambuscade, Indian tactics encouraged them to:

> Lie down on their faces behind a bush, and so cover themselves with moss, as that it would be difficult to discover them at the distance of a few paces; that having fired in this posture, they turn themselves on their sides, load again, and repeat the fire without ever showing themselves by standing up.[40]

The *Universal Magazine* explained how their method of fighting was quite different from European warfare, 'they do not draw out into the open field, but shoot from behind trees, and are exceeding dexterous both hitting their mark, and sheltering themselves from the enemies fire, or pursuit (...) and there is no overtaking them on foot as they run so swiftly.'[41] Similar praise appeared in the *London Evening Post*, an account stating how they were all 'excellent Marksmen, and having advantage of the woods, were an over-match for any regular troops'.[42] The piece also remarked that after British soldiers had fled the field, they told their officers that 'it was in vain to stand and spend their ammunition to no purpose against trees and bushes', a sentiment reiterated by a satirical poem printed by the *Newcastle General Magazine*:

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[38] Samuel Davies, *Virginia's Danger and Remedy* (Glasgow, 1756), p. 7.
[39] *Gentleman's Magazine,* Aug. 1755, p. 379.
[40] Ibid., Sept. 1755, p. 426.
[41] *Universal Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 117.
[42] *London Evening Post*, 26 Aug. 1755.

Ah! Braddock why did you persuade,
To stand and fight each recreant blade,
That left thee in the wood?
They knew that those who run away,
Might live to fight another day,
But all must die that stood.[43]

Far from presenting the violent nature of the Indian fighting style as an affront to European military sensibilities, many of these reports display an almost begrudging sense of admiration. As the *Universal Magazine* argued, 'the late melancholy defeat has sufficiently shown, in those countries almost entirely covered with woods, a handful of [Indians] are more than a match for a large body of regular troops'.[44] It is the conventional tactics of the British forces by contrast, which come under sustained public criticism.

Criticism of the British military approach to Monongahela became a prominent theme of discussion. An account in the *London Evening Post* drew attention to the 'obstinate persistence' of Braddock and his dogged use of shoulder-to-shoulder battle lines. Such tactics were said to 'always be the consequence of Old England officers and soldiers being sent to America, they have neither skill nor courage for this method of fighting, for the Indians will kill them as fast as pigeons'.[45] The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how a group of Native American allies responded to news of Monongahela by declaring that 'it was to be expected, as the men who (...) had crossed the great waters, were unaccustomed to the fatigues they had undergone, and strangers to the manner of fighting among the Indians.' A separate article in the same edition concluded that it was 'universally agreed that [Braddock] should have availed himself of the Indians in our interest, who would have reconnoitred his route, and detected the ambuscade'.[46] For an event posited as having been atypically violent, the lack of outcry towards those who were ultimately responsible for that violence is significant. The overwhelming tone, at least in reference to the martial skills of Amerindians, is one of respect.

[43] *Newcastle General Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 460.
[44] *Universal Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 116.
[45] *London Evening Post*, 30 Sept. 1755.
[46] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 425, p. 426. See also, Matthew Ward, 'Fighting the "Old Women": Indian Strategy on the Virginia and Pennsylvania Frontier, 1754-1758', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, C. III, (1995), pp. 297-320.

Instead of presenting strict adherence to a supposedly enlightened approach to war, as an innate expression of British superiority over the aboriginal world, public reaction to Monongahela reveals a more nuanced body of opinion. Espoused and reinforced by the news press and in military literature, the mutually respected principles of the European officer class were not a source of pride on this occasion, but a subject of embarrassment. As Horace Walpole quipped, Braddock had engaged in 'the longest battle that was ever fought with nobody'.[47] Contrary to the praise that traditional military values typically received, public ridicule of this sort fed into a counter narrative that lampooned the theatricality of European military culture. A satirical poem printed by the *London Magazine* entitled 'The Modern Warrior dressing for the Fight', expressed similar disparaging remarks about the military establishment, attacking their supposed arrogance and ostentatious:

Dressed cap-a-pee, all lovely to the sight,
Stands the gay warrior, and expects the fight.
Rages the war; fell slaughter stalks around,
And stretches thousands breathless on the ground:
Down sinks Lothario, sent by one dire blow,
A well dressed hero, to the shades below.
Thus the young victim, pampered and elate,
To some resplendent fane is led in state.[48]

Compared with European pomp and pretension, Amerindians appear the purer embodiment of military skill and ability. Endorsement by news commentators for such an irregular and physically violent warfare, promoted at the expense of more conventional and ostensibly civilised tactics, represented a challenge to the perceived integrity of British arms, as promoted in the preceding decades. That said, public discourse relating to the Ohio defeat was complex, and the resulting critiques of European military culture were often personal in focus rather than systematic.

In the wake of Monongahela, Braddock became the chief recipient of press censure. Realising the danger of an ambush, those who accompanied the General 'strongly urged him to retreat immediately, or send out irregular parties to clear the bushes sword in

[47] Lee McCardell, *Ill-Starred General: Braddock of the Coldstream Guards* (Pittsburgh, 1986), p. 269.
[48] *London Magazine*, Nov. 1756, p. 560. For an analysis of attitudes towards masculinity and its role in shaping but also undermining the image of soldiers, see Matthew McCormack, 'The New Militia: War, Politics and Gender in 1750s Britain', *Gender & History*, 19 (2007), pp. 483-500.

hand, both which he peremptorily refused, upon a supposition that it was below the character of a general officer to engage otherwise than according to the established rules of war.'[49] The wisdom of such principles was questioned again in a separate article, which noted that 'a great complaint is made of carrying on the war in America by old English officers and soldiers, who, it is said must always engage upon unequal terms, for want of knowing the method of fighting which is peculiar to this country'.[50] Highlighting the actions of another British commander, who like Braddock was 'no less solicitous' in trying to keep his troops in disciplined formation, 'the men, not withstanding his orders, broke their ranks, and ran into the woods after the enemy, whence they soon returned, with a sufficient number of scalps to justify their proceedings.' Disregarding European tactics appears to have been the correct course of action; the established 'rules of war' are something that ought to be broken rather than followed, a sign of British military anachronism as opposed to strength. Braddock became the personification of these failures. An account printed by the *London Magazine*, remarked how the Government:

> Committed as great and as afterwards appeared, a more fatal error, in the choice of a commander for this expedition (...) so haughty in his natural temper, that he was not apt to ask or take advice, and so sever in his discipline, that he never had the love of the soldiers under his command.[51]

A military background that had focussed on mastering 'all the punctilios of a review' and encouraged a distain for any troops or local forces who failed 'to go through their exercise with the same dexterity and regularity that a regiment of guards had usually done in Hyde Park', was the chief explanation for the British loss that day. As the author exclaimed:

> The effects of this education and temper soon appeared in his conduct; for he despised the country militia (...) and treated the Indians so haughtily, that most of them left him; nor would follow their advice, or that of any officer under his command. Nay, he even neglected the advice often repeated to him by his royal

[49] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1755, p. 426.
[50] Ibid., Oct. 1755, p. 474.
[51] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, p. 530.

highness the Duke of Cumberland, *of all things, to beware of an ambush or surprise*.[52]

The violence associated with the defeat was in many respects eclipsed by the perceived failings of Braddock as a person. As Sir Horace Mann replied in his correspondence with Horace Walpole, 'I was sorry to see some qualities in [Braddock] that I did not think at all necessary to consummate a general, (...) an ambuscade in a wood is too old a trick for any general of common prudence to be caught by'.[53] As further accounts show, however, it was not simply Braddock himself held to be responsible, but the tactics he espoused as a member of the European officer class. The issue was intuitional and cultural, not the responsibility of any one individual.

A series of letters written by the prominent clergyman Charles Chauncy, published as a pamphlet in October 1755, highlighted the flaws in European military attitudes with respect to North America. Explaining how despite common-held belief among ministers 'that the chief of command should be lodged in a British officer of known courage and experience in the art of war as practiced in Europe', it was primarily due to this decision 'that we met with such ill success on the banks of the Monongahela.'[54] Chauncy drew attention to another engagement, where provincial forces had again disobeyed their British officers and followed their own irregular tactics. Remarking how although they were attacked from the woods by a greater number of Indians than Braddock had faced, 'our New-England men, instead of being frightened by the Indians yelling, and standing as marks to be shot at (...) took them in their own way, bravely followed them into the woods, and soon obliged them to retreat'.[55] These 'sensible observations' were highlighted by the *Monthly Review*, which said the actions of the New England forces 'seems to deserve the attention of those at home, who more immediately ought to attend to whatever affects our interests in the colonies.'[56] The physically violent, interpersonal warfare of North

[52] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, p. 530.
[53] Sir *Horace Mann to Horace Walpole*, 20 Sept. 1755, Horace Walpole Correspondence, vol. 20, Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, pp. 496-497.
[54] Charles Chauncy*, A Letter to a Friend; Giving a Concise, but Just Account, According to the Advices Hitherto Received, of the Ohio-Defeat* (London, 1755), p. 16. Originally published in Boston, and then re-printed in Britain as indicated in the *Public Advertiser,* 16 Oct. 1755, then again in Nov. 1755 alongside a second letter detailing the Battle of Lake George. See, Chauncy, *Two Letters to a Friend, on the Present Critical Conjuncture of Affairs in North America* (London, 1755).
[55] Chauncy*, A Letter to a Friend*, p. 24. See also, *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 474.
[56] *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1755, p. 305.

America ought not to be criticised by British political and military leaders rather emulated, something already recognised by their provincial counterparts.[57]

A scathing attack on the government's handling of the American campaign by John Shebbeare condemned the absurdity of adopting European military tactics in such a wild theatre of operations, but also denounced the temperament of those who had insisted upon their use in the first place. The widely circulated *Letter to the People of England* criticised those who had chosen Braddock to lead the expedition in the first place, questioning whether 'a hot impetuous arrogance of temper' was the appropriate disposition for an individual:

> Sent to command an army in a new land, where hardships, more than in European countries, must be undergone by the soldier, where affability and compassion, gaiety, popularity, and encouragement in a General, are the necessary ingredients to sweeten and palliate the bitterness of that draught which war administers.[58]

Once again, the professed qualities - discipline, uniformity, and organisation - came under scrutiny. Instead, the skill of a commander was an ability to inspire confidence and self-belief, 'these are the means, and not the regularity of moving the legs of a whole rank, which incite and carry a soldier on to victory.' Continuing the trend seen in previous reports Shebbeare also condoned, rather than condemned, the abilities and irregular approach to war displayed by the Indians in spite of their violence.

> Would a man of common understanding have sent a self-willed, self sufficient, rash commander, to oppose an enemy in a country replete with opportunities for ambuscade and snare? The genius of which people is to combat their enemies in that way of fighting; a man whose very presumption, idea of security and contempt of his enemy, effectually deceived him into the ruin of his brave officers and his army, with an addition of disgrace to his own peculiar destruction; such a disposition in a General is a

[57] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, pp. 530-531.
[58] Shebbeare, *Letter to the People of England*, pp. 45-47.

> greater advantage to a discreet enemy than a thousand fighting men added to their party.[59]

Despite representing a fundamental rebuke of European military culture, the violent Amerindian tactics appear to be the superior choice for any wishing to fight in North America. It is important to reiterate, however, that just because an opinion aired in public does not make it indicative of public opinion at large.

A prominent pamphleteer and political commentator, Shebbeare was a vocal opponent of figures within the government such as the Duke of Hardwicke, and had previously challenged the authorities over issues like the Marriage Act of 1753. It is not surprising, therefore, that an outspoken critic of the Newcastle-led ministry would emphasise the apparent inadequacies of Braddock, or the flawed military paradigm he represented. Responsibility for the Ohio campaign, ultimately, rested with those who had drawn up and coordinated the American strategy; an attack on Braddock was an attack on Newcastle and his supporters in parliament. Indeed, previous studies emphasise the 'violent and unreasoning hatreds' that characterised much of Shebbeare's work. Described as a man of 'exceptional spleen', his prejudices included the Dutch, women, dissenters, Jews, and, ultimately, the Whig administration. [60] Although not always as venomous in tone, the same anti-government bias was also true of other examples of news coverage afforded to the Ohio defeat, with many commentators holding broad Tory or City-based Patriot sympathies.[61] In that sense, press coverage afforded to Monongahela was a critique of British military strategy, but one often motivated by personal and political animosity. Crucially, this was true of opponents and allies of the Newcastle Ministry alike, and widely acknowledged.

News commentators recognised that public criticism of Braddock, including his character, tactics, and political sponsors, represented an opportunity for rival factions. As one commentator observed:

> There are certain instruments constantly at work, who watch the ebb and flow of affairs, and ever little change in the minds of the

[59] Shebbeare, *Letter to the People of England*, pp. 45-47.
[60] See for instance M. E. Avery, 'Toryism in the Age of the American Revolution: John Lind and John Shebbeare', *Historical Studies* 18 (1978), pp. 24-36.
[61] See Chapter Two.

> people, that they may turn even our best dispositions to the public prejudice (...) for at a time when people's sunk by misfortune, ill news chimes in with that disposition, and may be almost said to be agreeable to it.'[62]

Similar observations appeared in the *Idler*:

> Among the calamities of war may be justly numbered the diminution of the love of truth', and that a news writer was a man 'without virtue, who writes lies at home for his own profit. To these compositions is required neither genius nor knowledge, neither industry nor sprightliness, but contempt of shame, and indifference to truth.[63]

The broader sense that press coverage of the Ohio defeat could be manipulated for political gain is again seen with publication of a widely circulated pamphlet by James Oglethorpe, the prominent philanthropist and MP. In *Naked Truth,* Oglethorpe spoke out against the backlash that followed Monongahela, blaming not the government for the violent defeat but rather the 'clamour' for war, which he saw as having 'precipitated Major General Braddock to his ruin'.[64] Arguing that influential parties had 'engaged the press on their side' for personal design, Oglethorpe poured scorn on those in the press who had pushed for Braddock to undertake such a 'desperate impracticable march', only to then criticise that decision when the expedition inevitably failed. Indeed, although the initial reports did highlight many of the logistical difficulties Braddock would face, few at the time suggested a radically different course of action, or that traditional European methods were doomed to failure.[65] An account printed by the *London Evening Post*, for instance, had even quashed the idea that harsh terrain or the threat of an Indian ambush would be an issue, the British troops considered 'sufficiently able to encounter with either, as they are a good body of men in all respects and in high spirits'.[66] In terms of perceived feasibility, a conventional, European military operation, though challenging, appeared neither impossible nor

[62] Anon, *An Appeal to the Sense of the People* (London, 1756), p. 2.
[63] 'The Idler, No. 31', in *Universal Chronicle*, 4 Nov. 1758, p. 249.
[64] James Edward Oglethorpe, *The Naked Truth* 3rd ed. (London, 1755), p. 30.
[65] Alan Houston, 'Benjamin Franklin and the "Wagon Affair" of 1755', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 66 (2009), pp. 235-286. For examples of earlier, optimistic coverage of the Ohio Expedition see *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1754, pp. 545-547; *Universal Magazine*, May 1755, pp. 236-240; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1755, pp. 304-306, p. 327.
[66] *London Evening Post*, 3 Jul. 1755.

foolhardy. For commentators to then express incredulity that Braddock had used such tactics was, for Ogelthorpe at least, hypocrisy and partisan:

> Let a news-writer, or coffee house talker, only think that the bodies of some hundreds of his countrymen, perhaps some of his acquaintance, are now torn by wolves, or eaten up by bears, in the wilds of America, because his cry, in common with others, occasioned the sending them thither (...) Nay, they are not ashamed to cry out, that his courage was a fault; that he should have stayed when he knew the woods were lined with men. Can creatures capable of reasoning thus, have any remains of modesty?[67]

A later publication expressed similar dissatisfaction. Reflecting on the 'terrible slaughter' and terror that 'diffused itself through the whole army' the author remarked how despite the 'many inconsiderate people' who criticised Braddock, no man could have shown 'greater military skill, or even more knowledge of the nature of the service on which he was sent'.[68] Although the author was evidently another critic of the Newcastle government, describing it as manifestly weak and the Ohio defeat as a result of the 'blunders in the ministers who planned the expedition', the refusal to condemn Braddock personally, unlike Shebbeare, demonstrates the complexity of public discourse associated with Monongahela. What does remain consistent, irrespective of political influence, is the shock caused by the ineffectiveness of British arms in response to Amerindian warfare, and the questions this posed about further expansion in North America.

Even when news commentary was generally supportive of the government, the Ohio defeat led to the same deflation in military confidence and uncertainty about the professed superiority of European warfare. The author of *Appeal to the Sense of the People* defended the Newcastle ministry by arguing the defeat of Braddock had been 'amplified beyond all truth and reason', and that no officer could have 'penetrated at once into the secret of that new species of warfare'.[69] In spite of that defence, the author recognised that

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[67] Oglethorpe, *Naked Truth*, p. 30.
[68] Anon, *A Complete History of the Present War* (London, 1761), pp. 25-27. The sections relating to Braddock are similar to those found in an earlier publication, William Smith, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America* (London, 1757).
[69] Anon, *Appeal to the Sense of the People*, p. 48-50.

British military thinking would need to adapt; 'these were things which our unhappy General there could learn by experience only, and in learning which he lost his life'. Another pamphlet of similar political persuasion stated how 'the misfortune which attended General Braddock's rashness, cannot in any shape be attributed to the ministry; for if they judged, as they did, by his behaviour in the last war in Europe, no other opinion could be formed of him, than that of a valiant experienced officer.'[70] Any compliments afforded to more traditional military values, however, were quickly offset, 'the misfortune was, those talents, which would have signalised [Braddock] in Europe, were his destruction in America. The Ministry could not foresee that out of a false notion of honour, he would not use the Indian manner of fighting.' Similarly, the pamphlet by Ogelthorpe conceded that 'it was not so extraordinary that they should be defeated where they were (…) it is more surprising that any should escape'.[71] When confronted with the stark realities of American conflict, the espoused principles of the British officer class appear wholly ill suited to the task. Such discourse fed into the broader debate about British overseas policy. As a letter addressed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* indicated, the Ohio defeat reinforced calls for Britain to abandon territorial pursuits in favour of blue water interest:

> We live in an island or maritime country, nature consequently points out to us, to be sailors, and that our young gentry and nobility should be all brought up to sea. Would you then have no army? None at all; for an army seems to be but a useless, burdensome, unnatural, and superfluous thing, of which you will easily be convinced if you reflect on what passed at the paltry defence of St Philips at Minorca, on the conduct of the late secret expedition, the exploits of Gen. Braddock, Gen. Webb etc.[72]

Despite the ideological or socio-economic motivations that often lay behind individual publications, public engagement with the Monongahela episode, and the violent warfare it came to represent, was about more than just short-term political opportunism. The clear sense of shock expressed across the news press, the complimentary attention afforded to the Indian fighting style, and the repeated criticisms levied against conventional military tactics suggest a broader debate concerning the projection of British power in North

[70] Anon, *An Impartial View of the Conduct of the Ministry in Regard to the War in America* (London, 1756), pp. 9-11.
[71] Oglethorpe, *Naked Truth*, p. 31.
[72] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1758, p. 20.

America, and overseas more generally.[73] Monongahela, as a violent, seemingly atypical news event became an effective vehicle for articulating complex national insecurities with respect to British global expansion and the idea of European military superiority.

Unconventional, not Unacceptable

Whilst public reaction to the Ohio defeat can highlight many of the misgivings relating to British military culture and its compatibility on the world stage, the issue of wartime violence in terms of an act considered controversial or immoral features surprisingly little throughout the early coverage. That public indignation was mostly associated with the failure of British forces themselves is one explanation, however, a more crucial aspect is that Monongahela, as a news event, remained exclusively a military encounter between two opposing forces. This broader military context helped to mitigate the violent nature of the engagement. As outlined in the *Law of Nations*, 'when the head of a state or sovereign declares war against another sovereign, it implies that the whole nation declares war against the other (...) Thus these two nations are enemies, and all the subjects of the one are enemies to all the subjects of the other inclusively.'[74] The defeat of Braddock may have been unusually violent, bloody, and chaotic by European standards, but it still satisfied a degree of expectation as to the prescribed limits of acceptable military conduct and, importantly, those it could effect. Despite highly sensationalist coverage that seemingly emphasised the exceptional and violent nature of Monongahela, conversely, European military precepts also afforded the battle a degree of acceptability. Coverage afforded to military incidents that took place throughout the French and Indian War highlight repeated instances where the press rationalised and legitimised Amerindian violence, rather than greeting it with outright hostility. Indeed, public reaction to violence committed during the North American conflict more generally was far more adaptable than initial impressions might suggest.

Following an indecisive encounter at Lake George in September 1755, reports highlighted how the enemy had initially surprised English provincial forces under the command of William Johnson, with the same tactics employed to such devastating effect at

[73] Ward '"The European Method of Warring Is Not Practiced Here", p. 249.
[74] Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, Vol. 2 (London, 1759), p. 27. Although France and Britain were not officially at war when the defeat at Monongahela took place, terms were delivered the preceding year to French forces in the Ohio Valley, reasserting English claims there, and demanding French withdrawal from Fort Duquesne. From a British perspective, the Braddock expedition was a legal enterprise.

Monongahela. One account explained how the enemy were 'concealed among the swamps on the flanks of the English army and maintained an irregular and scattered fire'.[75] Another pamphlet explained that having 'the advantage of being covered with a thick growth of brush and trees' and lying 'invisible' to advancing British troops, the Canadians and Indians positioned themselves 'in the most advantageous place there was (...) for an ambuscade'.[76] Combined with superior numbers, the author remarked how it was a wonder the British detachment managed to survive the ordeal. Observing how the French 'went into the Indian way of fighting, squatting below the shrubs, or placing themselves behind the trees', the English forces were nevertheless able to fight their way out of the ambush before later regrouping and forcing the French to retire. Though not the disaster Monongahela had been, as a news story the fighting at Lake George shared many of the same traits. Some of the most striking features of that coverage was the emphasis given to the violence alleged to have taken place. Reports suggested that French soldiers had scalped many of the British soldiers during the battle, dropping them to the ground when they eventually fled the scene. Another account printed by the *Scots Magazine*, observed how the Indians had rushed upon the English with their guns and hatchets, which the author described as:

> A more fatal instrument, than even the broadsword or bayonet, if managed with skill. The Indians will readily fasten it in a man's skull, at more than a rod's distance (...) it is certain death to a man to be within fair reach of their arm when stretched forth to strike with it.'[77]

The account also reported how after the engagement an English officer came across a heap of 140 dead bodies, of which 'he could not tell the precise number that were French, because they had been stripped by the Indians, and lay naked'. Once again, the North American conflict appeared to be far from the European military ideal. Yet despite recognising the visceral nature of frontier warfare, as with Monongahela, the violence at Lake George was also able to be rationalised by commentators who presented those actions as part of a broader, and ultimately acceptable, military paradigm.

[75] Anon, *Complete History of the Present War,* 57.
[76] Samuel Blodget, *A Prospective Plan of the Battle near Lake George* (London, 1756), pp. 1-4.
[77] *Scots magazine*, Dec. 1755, pp. 642-643.

A personal account written by William Johnson himself, and reproduced throughout the press, provided a routine summary of events, certainly not one that suggested the episode was in any way unique.[78] Only occasional references alluded to the distinctive physicality of Native American warfare, and when it did, conveyed little sense of emotion or opinion concerning those matters. [79] Reporting how the Indians 'scalped of their dead already near 70, and were employed after the battle last night and all this afternoon, in bringing in great numbers of French and Indians yet left unscalped', Johnson gave little indication as to what he thought of such practices, moving straight on to discuss how fatigued his men were.[80] As British agent to the Iroquois League, Johnson will of course have been familiar with the more violent aspects of North American warfare. As Peter Silver argued, 'scalping was the most important of several wounds that made up the standard set of injuries associated with Indian attack'. [81] Johnson's failure to express any reaction is possibly more a reflection of that familiarity, as well as the formal tone used in military dispatches of this sort, rather than indication of how he felt personally about the issue. Significantly, however, this sense of indifference was not restricted to Johnson but often characterised much of the broader engagement with the French and Indian conflict.[82] Indeed, evidence suggests that Amerindian violence was increasingly normalised, as the war itself became more 'Europeanised' nature.

As growing numbers of British and French troops were deployed to the continent, and formal set-piece engagements took on a more prominent role, so too did the news press begin to treat the North American war as a more traditional type of conflict.[83] An article printed by the London Magazine in May 1756, argued how:

> Our colonies in America will be engaged in a war very different from any they were ever engaged in before. Instead of a parcel of wild Indians, or a few French militia, they will now have to do with

[78] See for instance *Newcastle General magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 536; *Scots magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 496.
[79] *London Evening Post,* 30 Oct. 1755.
[80] *London Magazine*, Nov. 1755. p. 546.
[81] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. 78.
[82] Various commentaries discussed Lake George in a largely rudimentary fashion, and no details in particular appear to have been considered shocking, or even distinctive enough, so as to monopolise the overall coverage. See for instance, John Dobson, *Chronological Annals of the War* (London, 1763), pp. 2-9; *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, pp. 532-535;
[83] See for instance, *London Magazine*, Nov. 1756, p. 563, provided a summary of the fall of Fort Granville; *London Magazine*, Aug. 1758, pp. 379-384 provided details of the capture of Louisbourg; *London Magazine*, Sept. 1759, pp. 489-499, provided a report on the Quebec campaign.

> armies of French regular and veteran troops (...) a much more exact discipline will be necessary on our side.[84]

Framing the events of the French and Indian War against a familiar military backdrop helped to sanitise acts of violence that would otherwise be inappropriate by conventional standards. As the *Annual Register* remarked, the Indians had 'no cannon, were ignorant of the method of attack by trenches, and the usual forms of a regular approach [during a siege] but they supplied in some measure, their want of skill, by their incredible boldness and perseverance.'[85] This repackaging and redefining of the Amerindian approach to war is evident throughout the hostilities, particularly during the Indian uprisings that occurred in the late stages of the conflict. The press reported a string of ferocious attacks made against British outposts and military convoys throughout the Great Lakes Region. Fort Pitt and Fort Detroit came under siege for a number of weeks, with the garrisons of eight other outposts, including Fort Sandusky and Venago, killed or made captive.[86] Although portrayed as shocking and unexpected, the violence associated with those military defeats was by no means the outstanding feature. In August 1763 the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how a force of Native Americans had ambushed a group of British soldiers near Point Pelee, killing up to 67 of them. Later that year an account in the *St James Chronicle* told how sixty men had been surprised by a party of Indians, and 'totally routed' near Jackson's River. The *Royal Magazine* provided details of another engagement, referred to as Bloody Run, where a British force suffered heavy casualties after stumbling into an ambush. A similar report in the *London Magazine* stated that 500 Indians had attacked a military convoy near Fort Niagara, killing over 70, along with all of the officers.[87] Crucially, none of these accounts focussed explicitly on the methods used to inflict those losses, or suggested the Amerindian tactics were in any way exceptional or a transgression of military norms. The overriding concern is the strategic ramification of those defeats. Though alleged outrages committed against civilians and the back settlements *would* be discussed in parallel, as explored in the next chapter, when it came specifically to the military losses a more pragmatic, even conciliatory, tone is predominate throughout the coverage.

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[84] *London Magazine*, May 1756, p. 216.
[85] *Annual Register of the Year 1763* (London, 1764), p. 27.
[86] Ibid., p. 25.
[87] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 414; *St James' Chronicle*, 6 Dec. 1763; *Royal Magazine*, Oct. 1763, pp. 215-216; *London Magazine*, Nov. 1763, p. 604.

Instead of asserting the perceived authority of British socio-military values by emphasising a sense of difference, public engagement with the French and Indian conflict demonstrates a remarkable willingness to present the hostilities within the same analytical framework reserved for a more conventional military encounter. As the *Annual Register* remarked, the Indians who fought against British forces during the Pontiac rebellion 'acted with a resolution which would have done honour to any troops.'[88] On one level, this reinforced notions of British superiority over the non-European world, rationalising Amerindian warfare within the familiar perspective and terminology of a Euro-centric military mind-set. Conversely, framing the use of violence in such a way that lessened the distinctiveness of Indian tactics, as well as the cultural symbolism underpinning their approach to war, in effect mitigated those actions. This represents a duality of thought, where news commentators often recognised the exceptional nature Amerindian warfare and its incompatibility with European ideals in a general sense, yet simultaneously gave legitimacy to such tactics by treating them as part of a broader military paradigm. Explicitly juxtaposed with European military ideals, the violent nature of irregular warfare fell beyond accepted convention, but fluid interpretations of which situations fell within that framework allowed for a degree of ambiguity and expediency. This does not mean, however, that Amerindian violence went unchallenged. Indeed, if the acts themselves were largely indeterminate, the context in which they took place acquires added significance.

Violent acts committed against military personnel were widely reported throughout the North American conflict. A summary of the situation on the ground following the Braddock defeat, for instance, described the colonies as ‘one continued scene of all the horrors of war, rendered more terrible by the barbarous manner with which the Indians make it (…) enemies pouring in upon them, like an irresistible torrent, without anything to oppose'.[89] The *Annual Register* remarked how 'those who have only experienced the severities and dangers of a campaign in Europe can scarcely form an idea of what is to be done and endured in an American war'.[90] The differences were stark, ‘there were no generous enemies to yield to, no refreshment for the healthy, no relief for the sick (...) where victories are decisive but defeats ruinous; and simple death is the least misfortune, which can happen to them'. Descriptions of the threats facing British soldiers were not just general, but often very specific. After the siege of Oswego in 1756, another

[88] *Annual Register of 1763*, p. 27.
[89] Anon, *Complete History of the Present War,* p. 60.
[90] *Annual Register of 1763*, pp. 28-29.

publication reported how the Indians, being 'very thick in the woods', had surrounded the English fort and attacked any soldier who strayed too far from it.[91] In one case, a party of Indians descended on a group of soldiers who had gone in pursuit of a wild pig. Three were scalped with one 'most cruelly massacred by the blood-thirsty enemy, having his mouth cut open, and tongue cut out, his entrails taken out of his body, and afterwards crammed into his mouth'. Gruesome acts of violence were clearly a reported and recognised reality for British forces in North America, 'such is the fate of almost all persons that have the misfortune to fall into [Indian] hands'. Crucially, however, the tone and focus of many of these reports, again, shows evidence of seemingly contradictory opinions as to what exactly the public response to these acts should be.

The violence of the French and Indian War became a real-life drama for contemporary audiences to engage with, but the satirical nature of public debate often led to the belittling of those same circumstances. Writing in the *Connoisseur,* for instance, the dramatist George Colman remarked that:

> As the English are naturally fond of bloody exhibitions on the stage, I am told that a new pantomime, entitled "The Ohio", is preparing at this last house, (...) in which will be introduced the Indian manner of fighting, to conclude with a representation of the Grand Scalping Dance with all its horrors.[92]

The gruesome spectacle of Amerindian warfare is recognised but only as a form of entertainment, discussed with such nonchalance that it potentially diminishes the seriousness of subject matter. Another account, printed after the Braddock defeat, made similar observations:

> The music began, on which the two bodies run in at each other, acting all the parts the Indians use in their manner of fight, avoiding shot, and striving to surround their enemies (…) the dancers all at once rushed out again, leaving one only behind them, who was supposed to have mastered his enemy; he struck the ground with his tomahawk or club, as if he was killing one

[91] *Schofield's Middlewich Journal*, 10 Aug. 1756.
[92] *The Connoisseur*, Nov. 1755, p. 566.

> lying there, then acting the motions of scalping, and then holding up a real dried scalp, which before hung upon him amongst his ornaments. [93]

Although the author acknowledged the violent symbolism underpinning the display, as with Colman the descriptions express fascination and interest, rather than unmitigated hostility. Other examples of public engagement appear to have completely dispensed with the idea that coverage of Amerindian violence demanded a sense of earnest.

Despite their graphic nature, many accounts from the French and Indian War are almost comedic in tone. In June 1758, a satirical essay argued that repeated losses to the Indians hands had damaged British military reputation, 'we have been beaten by enemies whom we did not see, and at another have avoided the sight of enemies lest we should be beaten.'[94] The solution, according to the author, was to put British troops through an outlandish training exercise that would allow the soldiers to 'look an enemy in the face' without fear. The fitness regime involved assaulting a replica fortress made out of roast beef and ale, but also provided an equally absurd suggestion to lessen the emotive impact of Amerindian tactics:

> The Indian war cry is represented as too dreadful to be endured, as a sound that will force the bravest veteran to drop his weapon, and desert his rank; that will deafen his ear, and chill his breast; that will neither suffer him to hear orders, or to feel shame, or retain any sensibility but the dread of death. That the savage clamours of naked barbarians should thus terrify troops disciplined to war, and ranged in array with arms in their hands is surely strange (...) I am of the opinion, that, by a proper mixture of asses, bulls, turkeys, geese, and tragedians, a noise might procured equally horrid with the war-cry. When our men have been encouraged by frequent victories, nothing will remain but to

[93] *Expedition of Major General Braddock,* p. 21.
[94] 'The Idler, No. 8', in *Universal Chronicle*, 27 May 1758, p. 65.

> qualify them for extreme danger, by a sudden concern of terrific vociferation.[95]

Similar ludicrous reports appear throughout the conflict. One article from 1756 reported how a small party of Indians had shot and scalped a group of English soldiers near Oswego, but also described what it evidently thought was an amusing detail:

> The enemy came on in the night, and shot one of two of the sentinels, and in running off stumbled over this man, who was on the ground at some distance from the Fort, drunk and asleep, and did not strike him, but ripped off his scalp in haste and ran off; the man waking in the morning to his surprise found his head bloody, made the best of his way to the fort, where he was informed of the fray and that his scalp was gone.[96]

The violent nature of the attack is clearly shocking, yet its comedic presentation lessens the seriousness of the episode. An even more sensational story appeared in the *London Magazine*, which told of 'the wonderful fortitude of an Onneyouth Captain', who was captured and tortured by the Huron.[97] Despite having burnt his entire body, assaulted him 'with so much fury, that one would have thought they were going to tear him in pieces', as well as removing all the skin from his head, the protagonist was apparently able to break free and fight off his captors. If that were not remarkable enough, having been re-captured and set alight for a second time, the prisoner managed to escape again and attempted to burn the village down. Even after his hands and feet were cut off, and his torso then rolled into some burning coals, he was still alleged to have 'crawled out upon his elbows and knees with a threatening look and a stoutness which drove away [those around him]'; only with the eventual removal of his head was he said to have ceased. Although the account was said to be 'expressive of the savage and brutal behaviour of the Indians, now destroying our frontier settlements', the claims appear so outlandish that it makes the violence in question seem almost farcical in nature.

The repeated use of hyperbole demonstrates how reports of violence conveyed a sense of trepidation and outrage, yet often treated the issue as nonsensical entertainment

[95] 'The Idler, No. 8', p. 65.
[96] *Schofield's Middlewich Journal or General Advertiser*, 10 Aug. 1756.
[97] *London Magazine*, Sept. 1763, p. 459.

that an audience might easily dismiss. As the authors of the *Annual Register* admitted, 'if the actions of these rude campaigns are of less dignity, the adventures in them are more interesting to the heart, and more amusing to the imagination, than the events of a regular war.'[98] This is not to say press coverage that was more serious in tone was any more accurate; numerous accounts relating to Amerindian violence were often exaggerated, if not outright fabrication. Yet regardless of veracity, the range of responses is further indication that public engagement with the French and Indian War went beyond simple narratives that presented the conflict in binary terms - as an affront to British military values or something that demanded outright condemnation.

Alternative Opinions and Introspection

The fact that Amerindian violence committed by those who were hostile to Britain generated a very different response compared to instances where similar acts were committed by native allies reinforces the idea that such behaviour held an indeterminate status in the public mindset. Most reports from the period allude to the violent nature of Amerindians, and the physical harm they were capable of inflicting during the course of a military encounter. Whether those individuals were serving or hindering British interests, however, often determined the tone and focus of press exposure. A letter printed in the *London Evening Post*, for instance, stated that a party of Mohawks had:

> Surprised a part of French Indians near Saratoga, most of whom they took prisoner and put to the torture. Their designs are said to have been to set fire to the woods of the upper country; a project they had attempted in many places, particularly by the Merrimack river but happily had not succeeded in their intentions.[99]

As a deliberate military tactic, Indians used torture against one other as much as they did against Europeans, yet regardless of the victim there is still an expectation that such behaviour would attract a negative response from British commentators. In this particular case, however, as Amerindian violence had clearly helped to advance British military goals, there is a notable absence of public outcry. Another account explained how France had

[98] *Annual Register of 1763*, p. 29.
[99] *London Evening Post*, 9 Aug. 1755.

almost been defeated in an earlier conflict when Britain employed its Indian allies to 'ravage' the Canadian borders, 'keeping the French all the while in continual alarms and inexpressible terror'.[100] Again, irregular warfare appears entirely acceptable if considered of use to Britain. As Brumwell notes, Britain may have imposed its own standards on to the French and Indian War, but only by embracing those aspects that were distinctive to the North American theatre.[101] Still, commentary that overlooked or condoned Amerindian violence was not simply a result of pragmatism or strategic triangulation. Ideas of noble savagery, as discussed previously, are a clear influence in many reports that detailed military encounters with Native Americans. These accounts praised the tenacity, honour, and bravery of Britain's Indian allies, whilst seemingly forgiving their more violent tendencies. An account of the engagement at Lake George, for instance, reported how an English soldier, finding his gun damaged, called to an Indian ally for assistance. The Indian responded by immediately offering up his own firearm and then 'jumped over the breast-work, run up and took a gun out of a Frenchman's hand, turned it, shot the man he took it from, and returned to his post.'[102] Another article printed by the *Scots Magazine,* exclaimed how those natives who had served alongside the British had 'behaved with the utmost intrepidity (...) fighting with undaunted courage and resolution'. Similar remarks appeared in the *London Magazine,* which stated they had 'fought like lions'.[103] Even Braddock, whose low opinion of the Indians was widely acknowledged, apparently showed admiration for their eagerness to engage the French:

> I cannot help taking notice of a circumstance which happened at the burial of an officer. As they were firing over his grave, the Indians, who were some distance, believing there was a battle begun, marched up in a body, in great haste, to the place, that they might have a share in the action, at which the general was very well pleased.[104]

[100] *Universal Magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 183.
[101] Brumwell, *Redcoats*, p. 206.
[102] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1755, p. 519.
[103] *Scots Magazine*, Dec. 1755, p. 641-645; *London Magazine*, Nov. 1755, p. 545.
[104] *London Evening Post*, 9 Aug. 1755, p. 4. For Braddock's attitude towards his Indian allies see, McCardell, *Ill-Starred General*, pp. 183-239.

Not all coverage was as complimentary however, and though Amerindian allies might often be perceived through a lens of noble primitivism, so too are more familiar, prejudicial, tropes evident in public discourse.

Military dispatches from North America show that Braddock was not alone in holding the Indians and their method of fighting in contempt. Many of the senior British officers expressed similar views. A letter written by Jeffrey Amherst to William Pitt in 1760, for instance, condemned the 'treacherous and barbarous manner', in which the Indians had allegedly 'butchered' a party of soldiers during the Cherokee rebellion.[105] Dispatches from James Wolfe, written during the Quebec campaign, stated how he could only 'look cooly upon those hell hounds', and threatened to resign his position if forced to march his army through their country and endure their method of fighting.[106] Admittedly, this study focuses primarily on accounts that made it into the press, rather than responses to the North American conflict at a personal level. Crucially, however, although private reactions might have been overwhelmingly hostile, the discursive nature of news commentary meant the public response to Amerindian warfare was far more diverse and volatile. As Peter Way argues, the British 'shifted from one stereotype to another as need dictated, the "Indian" being made to play the savage, the cunning and treacherous ally, the greedy *homo economicus*, the drunkard, and the highly skilled woodsman'.[107] Indeed, the range of views expressed by the news press is demonstration of the broader synchronicity that defined the formation of popular attitudes towards non-Europeans, more generally.

One area where press reaction to the violence of North American warfare did appear more consistent was the perceived treatment of prisoners, yet even here, things were not as straightforward as they might appear. As discussed, established principles provided a series of guidelines for British officers - as members of a shared military class - as to their duty for ensuring the wellbeing and security of a defeated enemy. Although the press might overlook or absolve violence committed *during* a military engagement, once the context shifted to a post-engagement situation those same actions often became a more prominent issue of concern. Following the capture of Oswego in 1756, for instance, various reports indicated how the French commander, Marquis de Montcalm, had provided

[105] Amherst to Pitt, 7 Nov. 1760, U1350/026/13, Amherst Manuscripts, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.
[106] Wolfe to Amherst, 8 Aug. 1758, U1350/031/13, Amherst Manuscripts, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone. See also Brumwell, 'A Service Truly Critical', p. 158.
[107] Way, 'The Cutting Edge of Culture' p. 125. See also Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', pp. 137-157.

assurances to the English garrison that all prisoners would 'be shown all the regard that the politest of nations can show', and 'treated with humanity, and everyone agreeable to their respective ranks, according to the custom of war.'[108] Those guarantees were not upheld, however, as another account alleged. The ensuing violence described in stark detail:

> We imagined ourselves secure, as to our persons and baggage, but, to our great surprise, we were soon convinced to the contrary. No sooner had we delivered up our arms, than both officers and soldiers were ordered to the parade, there we stood, to be insulted by the enemy Indians, who, not satisfied with taking away our baggage, murdered several of our soldiers, as they stood on parade, and scalped all our sick in the hospital; they cut Lieutenant De la Court to pieces, as he lay in his tent.[109]

Despite promises 'that both officers and soldiers should be secured from any insults', the piece also explained how the French had offered up members of the colonial militia to compensate the Indians and 'gratify their insatiable revenge (...) to atone for the blood of the brethren'. The account demonstrates how perceived transgressions of military convention could infuse press reports with a sense of notoriety. Yet such commentary also lends weight to the view that many of the finer points of European rules relating to military violence were often open to interpretation. The same reports, for instance, claimed Montcalm had 'acted cunningly, in not suffering any of his British Majesty's soldier to be given up, as he well knew it would not be put up with. So the [Indians] fell on the poor provincials; thus the French keep to their treaties and articles of capitulation.' That such examples of legal manoeuvring also generated a negative response reinforces the idea that news commentators largely held military conventions to be universal, not something tailored to suit individual needs. This suited the popular image of Britain as an honourable and enlightened nation, forced into fighting a just war against a morally bankrupt enemy who showed no respect for principles of Natural Law, sentiments emphasised with particular fervour whenever British forces suffered a notable setback

[108] *London Magazine*, Jan. 1757, p. 16. See also Peter Way, 'Soldiers of Misfortune: New England Regulars and the Fall of Oswego, 1755-1756', *Massachusetts Historical Review*, 3 (2001), pp. 49-88.
[109] Anon, *The Military History of Great Britain, for 1756, 1757* (London, 1757), pp. 40-42.

The most famous incident involving the ill-treatment of prisoners occurred at the siege of Fort William Henry in 1757. As occurred at Oswego, a party of Indians descended upon a British force that had formally surrendered to a besieging French army. As Ian Steele has outlined in particular detail, the alleged massacre that took place was not simply a case of unchecked brutality on the part of the Native Americans, but a culturally specific reaction to a series of perceived slights and broken commitments on the part of their French allies.[110] Yet moving away from the actual circumstances to its discussion in print, the reaction of news commentators, perhaps unsurprisingly, focused on the violence alleged to have been committed. That the British troops had surrendered and expected protection under terms of capitulation is a central reason for the heightened and hostile exposure afforded to violent behaviour of the Amerindians. A widely re-produced account explained how a council of war had permitted the British to 'march out with all the honours of war, with drums beating, colours flying, and with their arms charged'.[111] As outlined in the articles of capitulation that were also printed, it was expected that 'all the sick and wounded that are not in a condition to be transported to Fort Edward, shall remain under the protection of the Marquis de Montcalm, who will take proper care of the troops, and return them as soon as recovered.' Yet despite apparent French assurances, on leaving the safety of the fort the Indians attacked the British column:

> They began to massacre all the sick and wounded within the lines (...), next they hauled all the negroes, mulattoes and Indian soldiers out of the ranks, butchering and scalping them; when our men began to march, they then began without distinction, stripped and tomahawked both officers and men, and all in the greatest confusion.[112]

Reports in the *Gentleman's Magazine* were similar in their condemnation, again, explicitly linking the alleged violence with the perceived flouting of pre-agreed conditions, stating how the Indians 'in breach of the capitulation' had plundered and massacred the garrison 'in the most barbarous and inhuman manner, butchering and scalping men, women and children without mercy.'[113] Another account stated that letters from New York were

[110] Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (New York, 1990)*;* Steele, 'Surrendering Rites', pp. 137-157.
[111] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1757, pp. 494-496.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1757, p. 475.

unanimous in their opinion that the French had 'most perfidiously let their Indian blood hounds loose upon the people'. Those who remained were made captives or slain, 'the throats of most if not all the women were cut, their bellies ripped open, their bowels torn out and thrown upon the faces of their dead and dying bodies, and the children were taken by the heels and their brains beat out against the trees and stones'. Compared with the largely indifferent or conciliatory attitude expressed towards the violent displays seen at Bushy Run, Lake George, or Monongahela, reaction to Fort William Henry and Oswego was significant for the explicit and animated nature of the responses, in part, thanks to those narratives that showed military protocol had been ignored. Reports of a similar nature appeared throughout the French and Indian conflict.

During the Pontiac uprising, an excerpt in the *Universal Magazine* explained that following the British capitulation at Venango, English soldiers were promised the liberty to depart for a neighbouring outpost, before then being set upon by the Indians and 'entirely massacred'.[114] Another account stated how at Fort Detroit, in full view of the besieged garrison, a captured officer had his heart ripped out and afterwards eaten by his captors, another was boiled alive, whilst the skin of a third prisoner was allegedly ripped from his arm, and made into a tobacco pouch.[115] Despite clear hyperbole, similar gruesome accounts also appeared during the earlier Cherokee rebellion, the *London Magazine* printing a letter which detailed the 'slaughter' of the garrison at Fort Loudon.[116] Having received assurance from the besieging Indian force that British troops could abandon the fort and withdraw unmolested, the reports stated that after marching no further than fifteen miles 'they were most treacherously surprised by a large part of Indians', who killed most of the officers, and soldiers. Similar remarks appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, again, describing how the garrison had found itself 'treacherously surrounded', before being subjected to 'volleys of shot with showers of arrows from every side that put them in the greatest consternation'.[117] Those taken captive were marched back to the Indian homestead, where a 'particular instance of barbarity which must not be omitted', allegedly took place:

> One Luke Krost, belonging to the garrison (...) was sacrificed to the brutal rage of their infernal sorcerers, who predicting evil

[114] *Universal Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 110.
[115] Ibid., Sept. 1763, p. 162.
[116] *London Magazine*, Nov. 1760, p. 605.
[117] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1760, p. 593.

> from his looks, caused him to be gradually put to death by the most cruel tortures, and then to be cut in pieces, his head and right hand to set on a pole in the yard as a spectacle to the other prisoners, and the rest of his mangled members to be gathered up and burnt amidst the riotous acclamations of a whole community.[118]

Situations where military personnel enjoyed a recognised status as a prisoner of war, or were protected under formal terms of capitulation, repeatedly provided the context for some of the most graphic accounts relating to the violent nature of those alleged circumstances. The parameters of an active military engagement, including the preparatory stages of a siege, made it easier for commentators to dismiss actions that may have been contentious by typical European standards. The situation changed where those participants shifted from being active combatants in a battle to perceived equals in a formally negotiated process of mediation. Of perhaps greater significance is not simply that brutal acts of violence received explicit attention in certain circumstances compared to others, but that doing so could promote a broader sense of disparity between European and non-European.

The alleged mistreatment of military personnel during the French and Indian War gave news editors an opportunity to juxtapose the savage existence of the indigenous American population with the supposed qualities of British values, polite society, and European civilisation, more generally. Indeed, a letter sent by Montcalm to the British commander, during the siege of Fort William Henry, subsequently printed by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, gives a sense of those distinctions:

> Sir, I have this morning invested your place with a numerous army, a superior artillery, and all the savages from the higher part of the country; the cruelty of which, a detachment of your garrison have lately too much experienced . I am obliged in humanity to desire you to surrender your fort. I have it yet in my power to restrain the savages, and oblige them to observe a

[118] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1760, p. 593.

> capitulation, (...) which will not be in my power in other circumstances.[119]

A similar report showed how at the Battle of Lake George General Johnson had personally restrained a group of Amerindian allies who attempted to scalp the captured French commander, Baron Dieskau. The episode apparently illustrated the broader differences that existed between European and Amerindian attitudes towards warfare. An account printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for instance, reported how the 'whole body of our Indians were prodigiously exasperated [as a result of the battle]', and that it was only with 'the utmost difficulty Gen. Johnson prevented the fury of their resentment taking place on the body of the French General (...) whom they would have sacrificed without ceremony'.[120] This scene would later be recreated in a famous painting by Benjamin West, who depicted an authoritative Johnson standing between a cowering Dieskau and a native warrior, tomahawk in hand. As Jonathan Conlin observes, the 'violent passions of surprise and terror on the faces of the Iroquois and wounded Frenchman respectively contrast sharply with the calm visage of the General'.[121] The idea of clemency is central. Johnson is the embodiment of British virtue, able to dispense mercy or compassion even to the most sworn of enemies. Crucially, however, this reinforces the idea that press coverage from 1754-64 also allowed for embryonic expressions of later paternalistic and civilising narratives. Johnson is saving his French counterpart, but more importantly is setting an example to the Amerindians. Commentary that used military violence to emphasise the apparent disparities between Britons and aboriginal populations, conversely, also provided opportunity for early public engagement with an emerging imperial identity, one where Britain was at the head of a range of peoples and cultures.

The reprinting of capitulation agreements further demonstrates how coverage of Amerindian warfare helped to articulate a sense of British cultural superiority, but also the perceived role Britain could play in educating the indigenous population. Following the capture of Fort Niagara in September 1759, the articles of surrender presented to French forces appeared in the *London Magazine*. Of particular interest are the multiple references that alluded to the danger, which Britain's Indian allies posed to French prisoners, and the efforts Britain had made to ensure their safety. Article VIII, for instance, stated French

[119] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1757, p. 496.
[120] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1755, p. 519.
[121] Jonathan Conlin, 'Benjamin West's General Johnson and Representations of British Imperial Identity, 1759–1770. An Empire of Mercy?', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 27 (2004) pp. 37–59.

soldiers were not to be plundered or separated from their officers. Article IX was even more explicit, declaring:

> The garrison shall be conducted under a proper escort to the place destined for their reception: The general shall expressly recommend to this escort to hinder the savages from approaching and insulting any persons belonging to the garrison, and shall prevent their being pillaged by them, when they quit their arms for embarkation; and the same care is to be taken on every part of the route, where savages may be met with.[122]

The specific emphasis given to minimising Amerindian violence lay in stark contrast with the more general assurances offered by the French at Oswego or Fort William Henry. This is interesting for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that by 1759, press reactions to the violent nature of North American warfare were already starting to move beyond the unfamiliarity and shock that had defined much of the initial coverage afforded to the conflict. Second, guaranteeing the French protection from Indian reprisal projected a view that Britain was committed to pursuing an enlightened, compassionate, and lawful approach to war. Indeed, as two further conditions promised, all of the surrendering forces - European and non-European alike - were to receive protection, 'all the Savages, of whatsoever nation they be (...) shall be protected from insult and be allowed to go where they please.'[123] Finally, by condemning the violence Indians were capable of, yet also declaring that Britain could prevent its allies from engaging in such acts, demonstrated the extent of British influence over the aboriginal world. As Vattel argued, when 'war is with a savage nation, which observes no rules, and never gives quarter, it may be chastised in the persons of an seized or taken (...) that by this rigour they may be brought to conform to the laws of humanity.'[124] Coverage afforded to North American warfare frequently reinforced the perceived primitivism of Amerindians, but it also presented British expansion in the region as an opportunity for the non-European world to learn from a 'modern' society such as Britain. Again, duality often defined public engagement in this area, with different themes expressed simultaneously.

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[122] *London Magazine*, Sept 1759, pp. 500-501.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Vattel, *Law of Nations,* Vol. 2, p. 49.

The complexity of public discourse relating to Amerindian warfare is evident in commentary that instead sought to explain and understand their approach to military conflict. Returning to the Lake George episode, although various accounts highlighted the savagery of those Mohawks who attempted to kill Baron Dieskau, there was also a surprising degree of sympathy expressed as to their motivations. Accounts emphasised the extenuating circumstances that had encouraged the violent temperament of the Indians, affected as they were 'by the death of the famous Hendrick, a renowned Indian warrior (...) and one of their sachems, or kings, who was slain in the battle'.[125] Interestingly, it appeared that many Britons shared in their anger and wish for violent retribution. The author of *Connoisseur* wryly observed that his own exploits were in danger of being over-looked, because 'the curiosity of the public is so much engaged in attending to the enterprises of Old Hendrick the sachem'.[126] The *London Magazine* printed a passionate speech allegedly delivered by the son of Hendrick, as well a poem emphasising how Britain not only grieved for Hendrick, but would also join their Indian allies if given the opportunity to avenge his death:

Hendrick, bold sachem of the Mohawk race!
More famed for virtue that thy noble place;
Thou fallen a sacrifice in freedom's cause,
Still shall thou live, and still demand applause;
Thy valiant tribe shall catch thy noble flame,
Avenge thy death, and dignify thy name.
Britannia's sons shall in the vengeance join,
Tread in thy steps, and with a fate like thine;
Whilst vanquished Gaul shall own with envious pain,
Who dies for freedom ne'er shall die in vain.[127]

Situations expected to have generated a uniform response from the press, instead, resulted in a surprising range of opinions. Indeed, the Amerindian approach to military conflict rather than reinforcing ideas of primitivism in public discourse, often led to a sense of parity.

[125] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1755, p. 519.
[126] *The Connoisseur*, Nov. 1755, p. 567
[127] *London Magazine*, Dec. 1755, pp. 589-590; Anderson, *Crucible of war*, p. 39.

During the Pontiac uprising the *London Magazine* drew attention to the 'art' of Indians in using subterfuge to gain access to British outposts, making 'each fort believe that the others were destroyed; persuading them to go off, for that there were such numerous tribes of Indians coming against them'.[128] Where an act of violence entered the equation, the transgression could heighten a sense of outrage. Accounts indicated how two officers at Fort Detroit sent to discuss terms with the Indians were subsequently detained and scalped by their captors, while at Fort St. Joseph the entire garrison was 'most barbarously murdered' after the Indians had managed to gain entry to the outpost by a similar ruse.[129] In September 1763 the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how English forces at Michillimakinac were taken by surprise by a group of Indians who had concealed their guns under blankets, and another who were 'playing at ball round the garrison, when at last the ball was struck into the fort, and the whole pushed in and massacred the garrison.'[130] As with European rules that covered the treatment of prisoners, according to military convention a siege was an open affair, conducted with respect for the opposing side. The willingness of Indians to flout those principles appeared to confirm their inherent savagery. Indeed, that a duplicitous approach to war was an indication of moral inferiority is a theme also apparent in press coverage afforded to the conflicts taking place in the East Indies throughout the same period, as later chapters explore. In many respects, however, the real significance here is not a lack of respect for the rule of law, but the clear ability of Amerindians to engage in subterfuge and broader military strategy - traits more commonly associated with Europeans.

As already touched upon, to present Native Americans as underhand was to interpret their actions, irrespective of the violence, in a more familiar context. These were not the actions of noble savages, ignorant of a more cynical 'modern' approach to the world, but intelligent, geo-political actors. The *Annual Register* described how Indians had made themselves masters of British forts through 'stratagem' and 'artifice'.[131] Despite having been 'disjoined by such immense tracts of impracticable country', they received praise for preserving 'an uncommon degree of concert and connection in their operations.' Similar observations appeared in the *London Magazine,* a commentary by an explorer of the North American frontier explaining how:

[128] *London Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 448.
[129] Ibid., Sept. 1763, pp. 503-504.
[130] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Sept. 1763, p. 455.
[131] *Annual Register of 1763*, p. 25.

> All the time they (the Indians) negotiate, and before they enter into a negotiation, their principal care is not to appear to make the first steps, or at least to persuade their enemy that it is neither thro' fear or necessity that they do it. And this is managed with the greatest dexterity.[132]

Newsprint could present the Indians as violators of established European principles, setting them apart as 'perfidious miscreants', who were willing to use all manner of dishonest and violent methods to achieve their 'execrable purpose'.[133] Yet in parallel, that same condemnation often recognised how Indians had been able to 'concert their measures with ability, to have chosen the times and places of their several attacks with skill and to have behaved themselves in those attacks with firmness and resolution'.[134] The parallel, often contradictory responses show that public discourse associated with the French and Indian War was far more complex than any one narrative might suggest. Amerindians were neither noble savages nor mindless barbarians, in the same way that violent deceptions, as a tactic, were simultaneously a rejection of British military ideals but also an expression of equivalence with Europeans.

The plurality that defined public discussion of North American warfare could also lead to sceptical attitudes towards European military principles, more generally. An account printed by the *Scots Magazine*, for instance, drew attention to the unwarranted displays of civility shown by Britain towards French prisoners. Explaining that after engagement at Lake George, the British had 'sent out parties, as soon as they could conveniently, not only to bury their dead, but to bury as many [French casualties] as might without knowledge of the Indians, to prevent their being scalped'. The French by comparison:

> Take no care to save any of our men (...) from being scalped; but suffered them all, officers as well as common soldiers, to have this indignity offered to them by the Indians and moreover, they left their dead bodies upon the field of battle, as we have been well assured, to putrefy and rot there, unless they were devoured by

[132] *London Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 444.
[133] Ibid., Mar. 1760, p. 161; Ibid., Apr. 1760, p. 219.
[134] *Annual Register of 1763*, p. 31.

> the wolves and crows, and other beasts and birds of prey. Considering this inhuman conduct of the French, I cannot but think, we exceeded in our civilities to the dead at Lake George. For we have long learned by experience, that unless we treat them as they treat us, we may expect ill usage at their hands.[135]

Faced with the violence of Amerindian warfare, the only practical solution was a looser interpretation of conventions that were supposed to be universal in their application. Another pamphlet included a series of correspondence between a British officer captured by Canadian forces, and a friend in England. Interested with the alien nature of the French and Indian War, the author declared his wish to be favoured with a detailed account of the enemy, 'their situation, connections with the savages, and their treatment of the English who are so unfortunate as to fall into their hands'. The response reiterated the brutality of the conflict, yet the chief concern to the officer appears to have been those captured by the Indians and sold to French settlers in Canada. Declaring the number of English slaves to be 'incredible', the officer refers to one instance where a captain 'had the misfortune to be taken (...) and instead of being used like an officer and prisoner of war, was obliged to perform the most servile offices'. Another soldier was made a present of to the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, 'who immediately set him about officers of servility in his house'.[136] It is perhaps surprising that servitude in the safe environment of a European household would elicit a more negative response than violent treatment at the hands of Amerindians, yet the solution offered is even more unexpected. The only way to prevent further such instances of enslavement is to increase the price Britain paid to Indians for French captives. Although critics might say this policy was 'inconsistent with the municipal law of civilised nations, especially the English who pride and boast is freedom', the author was firmly of the opinion that such arguments:

> May be answered, with a blush, that these very people, who deservedly value themselves for this prerogative at home (...) are themselves actually enslaved in America, by a handful of

[135] *Scots Magazine*, Dec. 1755, p. 645.
[136] Anon, *Military History of Great Britain, for 1756, 1757*, pp. 5-6, p. 12.

> Canadians, the very indignity hereby offered to us, by a people who stile themselves the politest in the world.[137]

Instead of reinforcing the professed universality of British military principles, the North American conflict could lead to the opposite, public discourse that questioned not only the superiority of European warfare from a tactical perspective, but some of its most fundamental moral and legal underpinnings.

Press engagement with violent military encounters that took place during the French and Indian War was multifaceted, changeable, and often contradictory. As seen with public reaction to Monongahela, the atypical nature of Amerindian warfare combined with the apparent ineffectiveness of traditional European methods led to outrage, shock, but also admiration from news commentators. Although much of the coverage was a product of socio-political manoeuvring, the range of themes expressed in response is indicative of the complex discourse associated with the conflict. Fluid perceptions of what behaviour and circumstances fell within a prescribed military paradigm shaped public reactions to reports of violence, as much as the act itself. That expediency, however, also encouraged a degree of uncertainty and introspection. Coverage afforded to military engagements throughout the hostilities simultaneously presented Amerindians as merciless barbarians, intelligent enemies who deserved respect, as well as effective and loyal allies. Public discussion concerning how British forces responded to these issues fed into a broader debate - was Amerindian violence a threat to national interests, a reason to avoid overseas expansion, or justification for the further spread of an enlightening British influence. To explore these issues in more detail the next chapter will consider the conflict from a different perspective, press engagement with violence recognised as having occurred *beyond* the remits of a military setting - acts committed against civilians, women, children, the elderly, and the infirm.

[137] Anon, *Military History of Great Britain, for 1756, 1757,* p. 11.

CHAPTER FOUR

NON-COMBATANTS AND FRONTIER VIOLENCE

Reinforced by nineteenth century literary figures such as Francis Parkman and James Fennimore Cooper, reports of gratuitous violence inflicted upon vulnerable European settlers have become a defining image of the French and Indian War. News coverage from the period itself, however, presents a more complex picture of public engagement. Sustained press scrutiny afforded to the violent mistreatment of British colonists was more than just a knee-jerk reaction from an enraged print community. An emerging imperial status, and the perceived responsibilities as well as challenges associated with that position, formed the backdrop for a range of critical discourse. As with violent military encounters that took place in North America from 1754-64, news of transgressions committed against English settlers became a subject of interest in itself, but also represented a vehicle for articulating broader public dialogue relating to overseas expansion. Yet where fluid interpretations of European martial principles helped to shape the discussion of violent military engagements, violence directed towards individuals who fell outside those parameters could lead to a different type of discussion and themes expressed as a result.

Historiography concerned with civilian experiences during the conflict has tended to explore the details of events on the ground or their impact on wider society, particularly the role Indian violence played in creating a distinctive American identity.[1] There has been less interest, by comparison, with the exposure that British news commentators afforded to those circumstances at the time. Where they are considered, it is usually as part of a broader thematic or chronological framework, encompassing the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period.[2] Few approach the conflict or the violence reported during it as a

[1] See Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York, 2008); Holger Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies: Atrocity in the American Revolutionary War', *Past & Present*, 230 (2016), pp. 124-159; Ian Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (Oxford, 1994); Michael A. McDonnell, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (New York, 2015); Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America* (London, 2001); Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1990); Elizabeth Hornor, Intimate Enemies: 'Captivity and Colonial Fear of Indians in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Wars', *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies,* 82 (2015), pp. 162-185.

[2] See Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth century Britain* (Oxford, 2005), ch. 2; Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature and Transatlantic Culture 1756-1830* (Oxford, 2006); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2002); David Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press 1720-1763', in Stephen Taylor,

period of study in its own right. Focussing on 1754-1764, specifically, this chapter builds on existing research to consider how British press coverage throughout the hostilities was more than simply an intellectual starting block for later humanitarian or socio-political debates.[3] Exploring how civilian exposure to violence was utilised as an issue of public concern, this chapter draws attention to commentary that addressed the dangers faced by English settlers, but simultaneously used those situations to assess if British policy and the colonists themselves facilitated or undermined effective governance in North America. Although sensational accounts from the period tend to offer a negative depiction of Amerindian violence, press engagement also provided opportunities for surprisingly critical, even conciliatory, analysis of those actions and the antagonism caused by European expansion - a subject typically approached from a post-1764 perspective.

Frontier Violence: Public Concern and National Security

Emboldened by their victory over Braddock in 1755, and exploiting the military vacuum left by fleeing British forces, Amerindian war parties began a series of brutal raids against the isolated English back-settlements. Although intermittent and often driven by local disputes as opposed to the broader inter-European conflict, attacks against the colonial population would continue throughout 1754-64.[4] Aggravated by a lack of coordination between the provincial assemblies, the frontier raids produced an undercurrent of fear and uncertainty across the British settlements. A recent study by Peter Silver is of particular relevance, 'mid-Atlantic Europeans would experience Indian war as being about the communication of strong emotions (...) talking and reading about it, fleeing it, and dreading it, rather than of coming under direct attack.'[5] Shaped by a turbulent history of mutual suspicion, tales of Indian savagery were already a staple of American folklore by the 1750s. For audiences in Britain, however, who had received only sporadic commentary relating to the subject, the

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Richard Connors and Clyve Jones (eds.), *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 65-81.

[3] See for instance Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. vii-19; Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anticolonialism* (New York, 2013), pp. 1-22; Eliga Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Gould, 'Zones of Law, Zones of Violence: The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (2003), pp. 471-510; P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford, 2009); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000).

[4] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, ch. 5. Wayne E. Lee, 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800', *Journal of Military History*, 71 (2007), pp. 701-741; Matthew Ward, '"The European Method of Warring Is Not Practiced Here": The Failure of British Military Policy in the Ohio Valley, 1755-1759', *War in History*, 4 (1997), p. 248. Ward estimates that an area of 30,000 square miles was evacuated because of the frontier raids.

[5] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp. 65-69.

defeat at Monongahela marked a significant turning point.[6] Thanks to an established trans-Atlantic exchange of news polemic, impassioned accounts of violent outrages inflicted against ordinary Britons flooded the British news market and remained prominent throughout the hostilities. Originality or sensationalism alone, however, does not explain why such reports received sustained focus from commentators, particularly as readers became increasingly familiar with the visceral realities of North American warfare. As with press attention afforded to violent military encounters with Amerindians, public engagement with circumstances involving violence committed against the colonial population went further than simply reporting events.

Despite a changing military situation, whenever reports appeared detailing the violent uprooting of civilians, a recurring theme is the sense of fear, uncertainty, and insecurity those actions had caused throughout the colonies as a whole. The first news of attacks made against English settlements reached Britain in August 1755, with publications such as the *London Evening* printing numerous accounts over the weeks that followed. One account, for instance, stated how Indians had killed or wounded several persons in the county of Hampshire, as well as committing various outrages there.[7] The inhabitants were said 'to be in the greatest consternations (...) the fears of the people, their being in want of arms and ammunition, give up reason to fear they will not be able to make headway against them'. Drawing on the language of sensibility, the account captures a sense of the panic and confusion felt by those on the ground. A subsequent report described how ‘an extent of seventy-five miles of the Maryland government, which was well settled, is now entirely deserted’, and the enemy now had ‘nothing to fear from a dispirited, divided, and defenceless people'.[8] Another piece observed how borders were now defenceless, with the colony now 'in a most distracted condition. The French and Indians are making incursions into the frontier countries, destroying all that come in their way’.[9] The idea that an invasion was underway is repeatedly emphasised; these were violations of British territory despite their taking place on the other side of the Atlantic.

In March 1756, the *Monthly Review* updated its readers on 'matters of still higher and more immediate consequence', and again used the symbolism of breached defences, remarking how in previous years Britain 'had only heard the alarm-bell rung, now, the

[6] Bickham, *Savages within the Empire,* ch. 1.
[7] *London Evening Post*, 28, 30 Aug. 1755.
[8] Ibid., 21 Oct. 1755
[9] Ibid., 18 Oct. 1755

enemy is within our gates'.[10] The editor then drew attention to his 'poor brethren in the once flourishing province of Pennsylvania', who having 'fallen prey to a perfidious, merciless, inhuman invader', now faced 'such scenes of distress and barbarity, as must at once make the reader's heart melt within him'. All of these descriptions present an image of Britons left exposed to the violent advances of an unchecked enemy. The response to this first wave of attacks is largely indicative of initial reactions to Indian raids throughout the hostilities. During the Cherokee uprising in 1760, for instance, the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how 'fresh outrages' were committed on a daily basis, the back settlers having 'quit their habitations and effects' in alarm, and the consternation being of such an extent that even the 'peaceable Indians were no less alarmed than the English'.[11] Regardless when they occurred or the broader military context, news of Amerindian raids repeatedly elicited the same displays of outrage, shock, and sympathy from news commentators. Yet recurring emphasis afforded to the plight and suffering of fleeing civilians also served an additional purpose, as a means of stressing the immediacy with which those circumstances needed addressing.

Coverage afforded to frontier raids provided a means to discuss or raise concerns about the security of British overseas interests and broader geo-political situation at that particular moment. Irrespective of actual impact or true extent of the violence, exposure afforded to chaotic scenes that followed an Indian attack represented an indictment on the perceived health of Britain's wider presence in North America. Reports of attacks against the back settlements, for instance, often received significant attention in the wake of a military setback for British forces. Extensive coverage afforded to the wave of Amerindian violence in late 1755, for instance, took place against the backdrop of defeat at Monongahela. News of raids carried out in and around Albany from 1756-57 occurred in parallel with French successes at Oswego and Fort William Henry. Accounts of atrocities printed during the Indian rebellions of 1760 and 1763 appeared alongside news detailing the capture of British military outposts throughout the Great Lakes region.[12] Reports of Amerindian violence, such as one that declared the situation to be of 'inconceivable confusion' with people fleeing their homes and 'burying their effects' in fear, were as much expressions of concern relating to British interests more generally as they were reactions to

[10] *Monthly Review*, Mar. 1756, pp. 208-209.
[11] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1760, pp. 34-35; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1760, p. 136.
[12] McDonnell, *Masters of Empire*, ch. 5.

a single episode.[13] Indeed, when considered at an individual level many of the reports could appear relatively insignificant, what William Burke dismissed as 'a few skirmishes with a savage people (...) which, in my opinion, unprofitably fills so many volumes'.[14] With many accounts produced by the colonists themselves, it is also unsurprising that a personal sense of urgency might not translate as easily when framed by larger geo-political events. Crucially, however, public discourse associated with frontier violence in a collective sense suggested that such matters were indicative of issues far greater in consequence. As a piece from 1755 stated, 'if the British Parliament doth not interpose then it required no great skill in politics to foretell that these colonies will be lost to Britain'.[15] Attacks against the colonial populace represented a call to arms, a sign that British security as a whole was under threat, which demanded an immediate response.

The use of coverage afforded to Indian raids to express wider strategic concerns was not restricted only to North American affairs. Accounts of frontier violence carried out in the summer of 1756, for instance, appeared amidst public outcry relating to the capture of Minorca. Similarly, details of civilian losses at Fort William Henry in 1757 reached British shores shortly after news of the British defeat at Hastenback. Again, initial reports of unrest among the Cherokee in 1759 appeared at a time when the British mainland was under imminent threat of invasion by France.[16] Exposure afforded to violence committed against colonial settlers often coincided with periods of heightened anxiety relating to security concerns in Europe. As further indication of the existential threats facing Britain at a particular moment, news of frontier raids reinforced a broader sense of public concern, as expressed via the new press. An account printed in 1758, for instance, explained how a dangerous and ambitious enemy threatened the English settlements in North America, but noted how that danger also extended to Europe, where it might challenge 'our very being as a free and independent nation'.[17] Press reaction to Amerindian violence, in effect, was a gauge for measuring the health of Britain's position on the world stage, previously referred to as a 'barometer of the state of British civic virtue in general'.[18] English colonists were the physical embodiment of Great Britain overseas; an attack against them represented an assault on the nation itself. To report and discuss news of their alleged suffering, therefore,

[13] *London Evening Post*, 9 Sept. 1755.
[14] William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America* (London, 1757), p. 160.
[15] *London Evening Post*, 21 Oct. 1755.
[16] Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (London, 2007); ch. 15-17; Anderson, *Crucible of War,* pp. 210-12.
[17] Arthur Young, *Theatre of the Present War in North America* (London, 1758), p. 45.
[18] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', p. 73.

was to articulate concern for the wider body politic. So when the author of a poem printed in the *London Magazine* lamented that North America was no longer 'the seat of innocence and love', but a place where 'pale terror haunts the secret shade, and hostile bands each wished retreat invade', they were also raising doubts as to whether Britain was capable of responding to that challenge.[19]

News coverage afforded to frontier violence served as a medium for conveying public concerns about national security in a general sense, yet a more specific use was in drawing critical attention towards those considered a threat to British interests. As John Richardson argues, the 'spectacle of suffering' was a means of arousing sympathy for victims but also 'indignation' towards those deemed responsible.[20] The range of issues, arguments, and themes used to achieve that antipathy, however, demonstrates why the issue of accountability was far more complex than popular images of the French and Indian War might suggest. Although news commentary focussed chiefly on a perceived indigenous threat towards British settlers, drawing upon familiar tropes that focussed on the savagery and barbarity of Amerindians, public discourse also shows a more sceptical appraisal of the situation which brought Europeans and fellow Britons under scrutiny. Despite the chauvinistic nature of many reports, press attention afforded to frontier violence throughout 1754-64 provided space for surprising exculpatory analysis of those actions, discourse more commonly associated with the post-Seven Years' War cultural landscape.

The Indigenous Threat

A persistent theme expressed throughout the North American conflict was the inherent savagery of the enemies Britain faced there, particularly Indian nations such as the Delaware and Shawnee who supported French forces in the region. As discussed in previous chapters, attitudes towards Amerindians, both in the colonies and Britain itself, were highly fluid and drew upon evolving interpretations of, and relationships with, aboriginal societies. Prior to the Cherokee rebellion in 1759, for instance, Indian nations located along the southern frontier had traditionally been considered allies, even subjects of the British Crown, only for them to be later described as savage murderers following the slaughter of the English garrison at Fort Loudon in 1760.[21] Admittedly, principles of Natural

[19] *London Magazine*, April. 1756, p. 189.
[20] John Richardson, 'Atrocity in Mid Eighteenth-Century War Literature', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 33 (2009), p. 96.
[21] *London Magazine*, Nov. 1760, p. 605.

Law allowed for, even encouraged, such changeable perceptions of the non-European world. Although provisions stressed the importance of 'Friendship' when engaging with other nations, the socio-legal framework also provided the pretext for retaliation when the terms of a relationship were held to be in breach, namely that British interests were being insufficiently served.[22] Negative exposure afforded to Amerindian frontier raids, in effect, was retaliation by means of a shift in public discourse. Yet where the news press sought to portray Native Americans as representing a genuine threat to British hegemony, commentators repeatedly placed emphasis on the more shocking aspects of their warfare and the allegations of violence committed against civilian settlers.

As previous studies have shown, the damage caused by a frontier raid, including the human cost, often followed a familiar pattern in terms of the type of detail reported during the aftermath.[23] Recurring descriptions included those of entire villages destroyed, with the inhabitants forced to flee or left to the mercy of raiding parties. The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported in early 1756 how a series of raids had left the back settlements around Fort Stoddart in ruin:

> Above 80 families having fled to the fort for shelter; the enemy have also ravaged all the country about the Potomack with so strong a party, that they repulsed a considerable force sent against them from Fort Cumberland; the officer who commanded this party, writes that the smoke of the ruined houses is so great as to hide adjacent mountains, and obscure the day.[24]

Expresses printed in *Read's Weekly Journal* reported a similar state of affairs, with news of entire villages burnt to ashes, Indians murdering or making captives of the inhabitants.[25] Details of this sort appeared throughout the entirety of 1754-64. In April 1756, the *London Magazine* reported the deaths of 78 people at a place called Ninisinks, with over 43 plantations raised to the ground by Delaware.[26] Similarly, in 1760 another account reported that a party of Indians 'had murdered, with shocking barbarity, ten persons, men, women,

[22] Alecia Simmonds, 'Friendship, Imperial Violence and the Law of Nations: The Case of Late-Eighteenth Century British Oceania', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42 (2014), p. 646.
[23] North American historiography is of particular use here. See for instance, Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, ch. 3.
[24] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1756, p. 6.
[25] *Read's Weekly Journal*, 24 Jan. 1756.
[26] *London Magazine*, Apr. 1756, p. 194.

and children; took eleven prisoners, burnt six farms, killed the cattle, and carried off all the horses, loaded with the goods of the people killed and captivated.'[27] Presented not as battles, or closed military engagements, these events were indiscriminate attacks against the lives and, significantly, livelihood of non-combatants.

Lockean principles of appropriation, labour, and property held particular resonance throughout the English diaspora at that time.[28] The violent nature of Amerindian raids represented a refusal to acknowledge a fundamental pillar of the British legal-political system. As an account by a British diplomatic agent remarked, the Indians make frequent attacks against the civilian populace 'upon whom they attend great cruelties, which these savages think they may lawfully exercise upon their enemies'.[29] Similar comments appeared in the *Universal Magazine*, which included a speech delivered to the Pennsylvanian Assembly. Excerpts conveyed a sense of alarm that 'upwards of a thousand families, who lately enjoyed the peace and comfort in their own habitations, were now dispersed over the province, many of them in the most miserable and starving condition'.[30] Furthermore, the frontier raids were not a distant threat but now a danger to the heart of English settlements, the account also warning that a 'bold and barbarous enemy' had advanced within a hundred miles of the Philadelphia, carrying with them 'murder and desolation'. Such descriptions highlighted the brutal nature of the enemies Britain faced in North America, but also juxtaposed those actions with the civilised characteristics that supposedly elevated British society above such conduct - respect for property, liberty, and the rule of law. As Chapter Six will show, similar themes were also expressed in response to acts of violence committed by Mughal forces against British settlers in Bengal. A lack of respect for material possessions, however, paled in comparison to allegations of aggression towards an individual's own person.

Press coverage of raids where an alleged physical assault had taken place repeatedly drew specific attention to the brutal nature of those injuries and state of victims' bodies when discovered. An account published in 1756, explained how following a frontier raid 14 bodies were found 'horribly mangled', whilst elsewhere colonial militia had encountered a string of deserted plantations, 'the way strewed with persons who had been mangled and scalped by the Indians, the horses and cattle in the corn fields, and everything

[27] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1760, p. 34.
[28] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1764), ch. 5
[29] *London Evening Post*, 18 Oct. 1755.
[30] *Universal Magazine*, Jan. 1756, p. 37.

in the utmost disorder.'[31] In the same way that captivity narratives often focussed on ghastly descriptions of torture and physical mutilation, so too did news coverage repeatedly draw upon similar themes. An article printed in the *London Magazine*, for instance, outlined numerous incursions made against the frontier, every one supposedly 'attended with monstrous cruelties'.[32] One case was cited where 27 persons had barricaded themselves in a homestead near the Holston river, until 'the Indians found means to set it on fire, and the people within, like those of Saguntum of old, were all consumed to ashes in their house'. The same publication included another account from the county of Augusta, which recounted how a small village was attacked by upwards of eighty Cherokee, one of the settlers being caught in the open and killed, another 'scalped, but yet alive, though mangled in a barbarous manner'.[33] Specific phrases such as 'mangled', 'ripped', 'scalped', and 'cut' appeared frequently in accounts, the language of sensibility used to promote an anti-Indian sublime. A recent study by Silver, which looks at the effect these descriptions had on colonial audiences argues that constant re-quoting of key passages established a distinctive image of Indian violence, one that was instantly recognisable.[34] Crucially, the period 1754-64 would see a similar impact on audiences in Britain. Repetition emphasised the gory aesthetic of those situations, focusing on specific details that were likely to elicit an overwhelming emotive response. Yet these references could also hold a deeper cultural significance, and the attitudes they conveyed often reflected more than simply an interest with the macabre.

Sensational descriptions of impaled bodies and mutilated corpses were not unfamiliar to British readers, details of alleged atrocities committed during the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries having frequently appeared in print at the time and then re-produced for contemporary audiences in the eighteenth century.[35] Newer accounts produced during the French and Indian War invoked the same literary tropes as their historic counterparts, encouraging audiences to draw parallels with an earlier, ostensibly more brutal age. Indeed, publications that concerned themselves with the current situation in America but also the historic as well, reinforced the notion that Britons were suffering from a form of violence thought to be largely extinct. Both the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *London Magazine* provided readers with a serialised history of the English

[31] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1756, p. 6.
[32] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 288.
[33] Ibid., p. 323.
[34] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp. 80-86.
[35] Richardson, 'Atrocity in Mid Eighteenth-Century War Literature', pp. 96-98.

settlements, including details of hostile acts that had previously occurred. The May 1756 edition of the *London Magazine* provided a history of New England between 1690-1720 and outlined repeated occasions where the colonists had come into violent conflict with Amerindians, such as an instance from 1694 where the Indians had 'murdered or carried away captive several persons near Piscataway'.[36] Another edition reported a similar incident that had taken place during the Pequot War, where Indians killed nine men and carried off two young women from a village in Connecticut, whilst elsewhere they were said to have murdered all the English 'who had the misfortune to fall under their power'.[37] Crucially, that similar events still appeared to be taking place across the Atlantic, during a supposed period of Enlightenment and Reason, underscored the primitive nature of the violence and perceived disparity between Britain and Amerindians in terms of development. A report from 1760, for instance, which claimed Indians had committed 'the most barbarous outrages upon the back settlers, cutting some of them in pieces, and hanging their mangled limbs upon poles', was as much a reflection on the perceived barbarity of aboriginal society, as it was a warning of the threats posed by Amerindians.[38] Another account by one Lewis Sinclair, printed the following year by the *Royal Magazine*, told of his ordeal at the hands of a Cherokee raiding party. Reporting how his head 'ran on nothing now but stones, sticks, pitch pine, scalping knives, to Mohawks, and the rest of the instruments of savage cruelty', Sinclair alleged that he was stripped naked, slathered in lard and would have been cooked alive had he not managed to escape while his captors slept.[39] Violent imagery of abused victims or disfigured corpses, again, fed into the idea that Britain itself was under attack, the physical dismemberment of the back settlers representing the frailty of British society more generally.[40] Yet in addition to the symbolism underpinning these physical descriptions, the specific focus given to *who* the alleged victims of that violence had been was equally as important.

News commentary repeatedly outlined how frontier raids exposed ordinary civilians to the ravages of the Indian attacks, such as farmers and traders, but that same commentary often gave particular attention to instances involving women and children. A piece in the *London Evening Post* explained how Indians had 'scalped fourteen families excepting a few persons who escaped. They dashed out the children's brains on the door

[36] *London Magazine*, May 1756, p. 229.
[37] Ibid., Feb. 1756, p. 72.
[38] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1760, p. 136.
[39] *Royal Magazine*, Jul. 1761, p. 28.
[40] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. 91.

posts before they scalped the parents.'[41] Another account in the same edition confirmed that eleven individuals had been killed in the affair including 'the murder of one William, his wife and grandson'. The emphasis placed on the nature of the victims was clear, these were not soldiers or even grown men who might have been able to fight off their attackers, but young children. Again, the language of sensibility focused on the perceived suffering of innocents to elicit feelings of compassion, outrage, and horror. A sermon printed in 1756 explained how families across the frontier had been asleep in their beds of rest, when:

> Without dreaming of danger, the first thing that awakened them was the deadly blow of the bloody axe, or the dying shrieks of a murdered father, a wife, or a child. Some of them were carried captive and afterwards found in the woods, mangled and half rotten, with all the marks of barbarity and leisurely torture upon them; scalped or beheaded; their women ripped up and left in a posture too monstrous to be expressed, and even their blood drank.[42]

Imagery of defenceless families, forcibly taken from their own homes, provided the basis for a strong emotive rhetoric, which publications in Britain used to express sympathy and anger for their colonial brethren. An update on North American affairs printed by the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for instance, sought to provide a summary of recent transactions there, but remarked that 'little can be added but other instances of the barbarity of the Indians, and the distress and destruction of our back settlers.'[43] The lengthy report that followed told how English forces arriving at one plantation, 'found a girl about five years old scalped, but yet alive'. At another home, they found 'much damage done, but no person in it or about it, except in the garden a child about eight years old, scalped and dead'. Proceeding to a neighbouring homestead, the account finally reported how 'in a corn field [the troops] found a woman and a young child both scalped and dead.' In this one account alone, there are three separate references to a child killed in an extremely violent manner, the repetition serving to accentuate the apparent scale and indiscriminate nature of the violence.

[41] *London Evening Post*, 30 Aug. 1755.
[42] Samuel Davies, *Virginia's Danger and Remedy* (Glasgow, 1756), pp. 8-9.
[43] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1756, p. 6.

Reports emphasising the horrific nature of frontier raids and the cruel targeting of non-combatants appeared repeatedly throughout 1754-64. During the Cherokee rebellion an account by one Patrick Colhoon, printed by the *London Magazine,* reported how a large group of civilians from a settlement in Georgia had attempted to move their wives, children, and belongings to a safer part of the country, when Indians attacked the convoy.[44] Their loss, it was said, 'amounted to about 50 persons, chiefly women and children'. Returning to the scene at a later point, the author found twenty of their bodies 'most inhumanly butchered'. Such reports, explaining how English women and children were habitually suffering at the hands of an unchecked enemy, reinforced existing stereotypes that portrayed Amerindians as vicious, cruel, and bloodthirsty savages. As Samuel Johnson remarked in *The Idler*, public interest with these issues was clear:

> In a time of war the nation is always of one mind, eager to hear something good of themselves and ill of the enemy (...) scarce anything awakens attention like talk of cruelty. The writer of news never fails in the intermission of action to tell how the enemies murdered children and ravished virgins; and if the scene of action be somewhat distant, scalps half the inhabitants of a province.[45]

From the perspective of a British audience, the significance was not simply that Indians appeared to be capable of such outrages, but rather the deliberate targeting of women, children, the sick, or the elderly, was a fundamental transgression of Natural Law.

Commentators frequently compared frontier violence with a crime - a murder, an assault, or massacre - opposed to a legitimate or acceptable military tactic.[46] To present such actions as a transgression was to judge them against universal standards long espoused within European intellectual circles. As discussed in Chapter Two, individual works that formed the basis of these principles were also widely recognised by the reading public. As Ralph Griffiths outlined in the *Monthly Review*:

> It is true, in some cases it is lawful, by the law of nations, to destroy an enemy, even where he makes no resistance; as in

[44] *London Magazine*, Apr. 1760, p. 219.
[45] Samuel Johnson, 'The Idler, No. 31', in *Universal Chronicle*, 4 Nov. 1758, p. 249.
[46] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp. 56-57. From a Native American perspective the targeting of civilians was an acceptable and important aspect of their approach to war. Frontier raids created a climate of fear and anxiety that undermined the resolve of a larger and more powerful colonial population.

> taking a citadel by storm for instance, it is lawful to put everyone to sword without distinction. But this exception rather confirms than falsifies the general doctrine we would establish, and proves that we ought to wage war with as little bloodshed as possible.[47]

A central pillar of that legal framework was the notion that it was fundamentally wrong to subject those who were unable to defend themselves to unnecessary acts of violence. As Vattel argued in the *Law of Nations*, women and children could be the subjects of an enemy state, and should be treated as enemies, 'but this does not import that it is lawful to use them as men who carry arms, or are able to carry them'.[48] In contrast, Amerindians and the frontier violence they practiced apparently showed little respect for these ideals, deliberately targeting the very people entitled to protection from the effects of war. Although certainly a more pressing and prominent issue within colonial public discourse, crucially, the same themes were also discussed by news commentators in Britain.[49] As a pamphlet printed in 1757 remarked:

> Oswego is now lost, many thousand farms before the opening of the next Spring, will probably be abandoned; and the interior settlements deluged with the innocent blood of all ages and sexes. Indeed, my Lord, 'tis not beneath the most elevated station, to indulge the benevolent feeling of humanity; nor, retiring awhile from the pomp and gaiety that surrounds you, to shed a pitying tear over families inhumanly bereft of their substance, or more inhumanly slaughtered in their beds.[50]

The public image was not just of a depraved enemy but an immoral one, who was against the enlightened values which Britons liked to imagine underpinned their own approach to war, and interactions with the world more generally.

A lengthy account published in 1760 provides an illustration of the aversion expressed towards those who apparently disrespected the rules of war, but also the notion that when pitted against such individuals, Britain would remain true to its principles.

[47] *Monthly Review*, May 1759, p. 388.
[48] Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, Vol. 2 (London, 1759), p. 27.
[49] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. 58.
[50] William Smith, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America* (London, 1757), p. 143.

Outlining the details of an earlier incident, the author claimed readers would enjoy what he thought to be 'a striking instance of the righteous judgments providence inflicts (...) on the cruel, the base and the treacherous.'[51] The story told of a militia officer called Mr Francis who, accompanied by his wife and infant son, commanded a small garrison on the Georgian frontier. Whilst Francis was away on patrol, Yamasee Indians broke into the British outpost and 'before the poor woman's eyes', scalped the soldiers who had remained behind to defend it.[52] In spite of appeals for mercy and 'after many shocking insults and brutalities, too gross, and too affecting, for readers ears, they shot the child in its mother's arms, and soon after also dispatched the frantic matron in the same manner'. Francis returned to find the fort burned to the ground, providing 'opportunity only of paying his last duties to the mangled remains of his family', but also filling him with a desire to 'take revenge upon the savage monsters'. This chance came three years later when his regiment ambushed a group of Indians, among who happened to include 'the very villain that shot poor Mrs Francis.' Overcome by grief and rage, the account explained how the officer was close to shooting the assailant there on the spot. On reflection, however, he decided that 'it was improper for him to show an example of this sort', leaving his fate to a group of Indians who had fought alongside the English. In a final display of compassion, he also apparently ordered they were to 'put him to no further torture'. This one account highlights many of the key aspects associated with Amerindian frontier violence, but also the underlying themes that coverage of those circumstances often conveyed. The familiar tropes are all present - the isolated settlement, the savage enemy, the grisly descriptions of murder, torture, and despoiled victims - yet the account also emphasises the rules by which to judge actors in those situations. The Indians are the cruel monsters, who have no regard for the fundamentals of European virtue or law, in contrast, the English officer is the embodiment of those values, even when faced with the most testing of personal circumstances.

The experience of violence, as represented in print, was a cathartic process, a way for commentators to explain and give meaning to the senseless bloodshed they reported. As observations in *The Idler* stated, 'in a World like ours, where our senses assault us (...) almost all the moral good which is left among us, is the apparent effect of physical evil.'[53] Pain and suffering were necessary to appreciate those aspects of life that were virtuous, 'what virtue there is Misery produces far the greater part. Physical Evil may be therefore

[51] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, pp. 279-280
[52] Ibid.
[53] 'The Idler. No. 90.', in *The Universal Chronicle*, 22 Dec. 1759, p. 409.

endured with patience since it is the cause of moral Good.' Reports from America detailing the violent mistreatment of innocent civilians, underlined the righteousness of Britain by presenting those incidents not as defeats, but opportunities for just and virtuous actions to follow thereafter. Coverage of frontier raids, in a sense, was a public appeal for Britain to assert its own values and punish those who openly violated them. Again, a purpose of war was to:

> Suppress violence and injustice, it gives a right to compel by force, him who is deaf to the voice of justice. It gives a right of doing against the enemy whatever is necessary for weakening him, for disabling him from making any farther resistance in support of his injustice.[54]

News reports might show Amerindian violence to be horrific, but it was also unavoidable, something to endure before justice and reason could eventually prevail. The strength of feeling behind these reactions is evident in how reported atrocities from the wider the Seven Years' War receive similar attention from commentators. An article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* from 1760, for instance, demonstrates the extent of hostility that greeted alleged barbarities committed against German civilians in Brandenburg by Russian and Austrian forces. Interestingly, those actions drew comparisons with the behaviour of aboriginal societies such as those in North America.[55] The local hospital at Frederichstadt, a refuge for 'the unhappy, the infirm, and the indigent' and expected to be 'respected by the most cruel of enemy', was instead 'pillaged and exposed to excesses of different kinds.' In a similar fashion, the King's chapel at Charlottenbourg, described as a 'sacred place, which the most savage nations would have respected', was ' profaned by their nastiness'. As the author concluded:

> In short wherever they came, they beat an abused the inhabitants in the most cruel manner, and barbarously dishonoured the women, without distinction of age or condition, in presence of their parents and husbands. Finally, to fill up the measure of their deeds of inhumanity and horror, they laid aside all regard to the sepulchres of the dead, which have always been held in a kind of

[54] Vattel, *Law of Nations*, Vol. 2, p. 48.
[55] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1760, pp. 573-576.

> veneration by the most barbarous of nations (...) opened the coffin of the master of the horse to the King, who had been dead 12 years, and those of his lady and children, stripped their bodies and threw them on the ground.[56]

Irrespective of whether news commentary focussed on the physical injuries, the victims, or perceived illegality of those actions, the results were nearly always the same - the championing of values held to be universal, and the demonisation of anyone who failed to meet those expectations. Crucially, however, the very individuals who would frequently end up admonished for their alleged transgressions were those perceived as a threat or hindrance to British interests, which in the case of North America was often the indigenous population. Yet even the most common or explicitly stated of opinions relating to Amerindian violence could be far more complex than first impressions might suggest.

As noted in the previous chapter, commentators frequently described Indian approaches to military engagements as demonstration of their cunning and intelligence. In a similar fashion, the press often presented frontier raids as a coherent strategy, rather than acts of unrestrained or senseless violence. In the summer of 1756, the *Gentleman's Magazine* reported how although several counties in Virginia and New York had been badly affected by the Amerindian attacks, the Indians had apparently 'left off their ravages for six weeks past, for what reasons we do not well know'.[57] As a supplementary note explained, however, the decrease in violence was thought to be a result of negotiations with the Iroquois, to whom Britain had appealed 'to put a stop to the violent proceedings of their cousins the Delaware and Shawnees, and to bring them to listen to terms of peace'. The account is interesting, not only because it shows British commentators were appreciative of the fact they were dealing with a complex arrangement of individual nations - each pursuing their own agenda - but also because the violence in question was framed as a negotiable process. Rather than indiscriminate acts, frontier raids were an intentional strategy of a foreign power. Such actions might have led to a blanket condemnation in the British press, yet their severity and broader strategic impact, conversely, demanded recognition, even respect, from external observers.

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[56] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Dec. 1760, p. 575. See also Marian Fussel, '"Feroces et Barbares?" Cossacks, Kalmyks and Russian Irregular Warfare During the Seven Years' War', in Mark H. Danley and Patrick Speelman (eds.), *The Seven Years' War: Global Views* (Boston, 2012), pp. 243-262.
[57] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1756, p. 359.

As details of the Pontiac rebellion filtered through to British shores in 1763, the *Gentleman's Magazine* remarked how accounts from America were 'full of murders and outrages committed by the savages in our back settlements', one reporting that 'out of 120 traders, only two or three have escaped their butchery.'[58] Reactions to this 'horrid design' were overwhelmingly negative, yet a prominent theme was the idea that such violence was by no means random in nature. The renewed conflict in America did not appear to be 'the sudden irruption of a banditti, but a real and premeditated war concerted between the Six Nations, and the Delaware, who, previous to the commencement of hostilities, had sent deputies (...) with the grounds of their complaints'. The *Annual Register* explained that a 'silent revolution was accomplished in the balance of the savage empire in America', with Indian nations connecting themselves in such a way 'to have armed against us a great part of that continent.'[59] An account in the *Universal Magazine* was of a similar opinion, the hostilities 'seem to have been meditated some time past, though but lately brought to maturity'.[60] The unrestricted targeting of non-combatants may not have adhered to European standards, but an enemy capable of committing and coordinating such acts deserved recognition as an adversary with clear objectives. The broader significance is that as a subject of public discourse, the violent treatment of civilians during the French and Indian War did not always equate to an outright dismissal of Amerindians as mindless savages, driven by base instinct. Indeed, some of the most graphic reports of frontier violence often represented not a rebuke of the Indians, but rather the French forces seen to exert influence over them.

European Rivals

Francophobe sentiment was central in shaping press coverage of the North American hostilities. The colonies became the principal stage for Anglo-French rivalry during the Seven Years' War, and as with previous conflicts both sides drew upon the support of Amerindian allies. Unprecedented coverage afforded to frontier violence, however, inevitably led to questions over the extent of French complicity. A collection of reports printed in 1757, for instance, sought to exhibit 'the cruelty and infidelity of the French and their savage Indians'.[61] One account by Peter Lewney, an ensign from Virginia, told how he along with nine other men, six women, and five children, were held up in a blockhouse

[58] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 413.
[59] *Annual Register of the Year 1763* (London, 1764), p. 24.
[60] *Universal Magazine*, Aug. 1763, p. 109.
[61] Anon, *The Military History of Great Britain, for 1756, 1757* (London, 1757), p. i.

when it was attacked by the Shawnee, and then put to the torch.[62] Subsequently taken captive, the author reported how the Indians sacrificed one of their number 'whom they roasted alive, and tormented a whole night before he expired'. Significantly, the violence allegedly took place in full sight of some French rangers that had accompanied the Indians, but who 'seemed unconcerned at their horrid barbarity, nor ever endeavoured to restrain them, notwithstanding the moving entreaties and bitter complaints of the poor man.' When it came to ensuring the welfare of civilians, the expectation was that European powers should promote certain standards among their troops, but also those who fought alongside them. Reports from North America, which indicated a potential ambivalence when it came to this issue, reinforced anti-French sentiment within the public mindset.

Occasions where France was presented as an active supporter of Indian violence, rather than simply acquiescent, was a cause for even greater consternation.[63] Printed on a monthly basis, *The Journal of a Learned and Political Club*, which informally reported parliamentary proceedings, claimed that France was guilty of 'supporting, assisting, and furnishing with arms and ammunition, those Indians who, at their instigation, have been murdering and scalping our people in Nova Scotia.'[64] Similar remarks appeared in an essay published in 1758, which declared the hostilities in America to be a result of France having taken advantage of Britain's 'love of peace', and their desire to 'incite and privately assist the natives of that wild country to, plunder and murder our people'.[65] Even when French forces had been all but defeated in the region, the portrayal of France continued to be that of a malevolent influence. The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported in 1760 how attacks by the Cherokee had been committed entirely 'at the instigation of the French'.[66] Other commentators went even further, appearing to absolve the Indians of responsibility entirely. The Preface to the *London Magazine* published in January 1758, exclaimed that:

> We have good reason to hope, that (...) we shall be able to destroy that nest of French vipers in Canada, whose constant employment, in peace as well as war, has been to poison the

[62] Anon, *Military History of Great Britain*, p. 87.
[63] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', p. 74.
[64] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1757, p. 114. See also Hannah Barker, *Newspaper, Politics, and English Society 1695-1855* (London, 2000), p. 77.
[65] *London Magazine*, Jul. 1758, pp. 323-324.
[66] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1760, p. 34.

> minds of the honest, but simple Indians, and to excite them to murder and scalp as many of our people as they could master.[67]

Similar observations appear in a piece from 1763, which included details of an alleged discussion between a group of Indians and the Governor of Canada, who tried to persuade them that 'like a thief' Britain had stolen their lands 'while his back was turned', but that France would take revenge and return what the British had taken.[68] The author claimed such remarks were demonstration of the 'same notions and prejudices, we find industriously spread amongst the six nations', which he declared 'shows so much of the nature of the Indians, and the artifices of the French'. The Indians were not at fault, rather their French masters who consistently manipulated and excited them to violence. As another account printed following the capture of Montreal declared:

> By this great event, the war in America is at an end, and the Indians will no longer be corrupted by rival interests, we shall no more hear of scalping parties, bands of ignorant savages, hired by Christians to murder other Christians in cold blood; it is to be hoped for the honour of human nature, and for the sake of the poor Indians, who have been made both miserable and wicked by our contentions, that whatever may be given up at a peace, America will be retained (...) without dividing the Indians against each other, in a quarrel in which they have not interest; without exciting the thirst of blood amongst them be pecuniary rewards, and entailing upon their posterity the ferocity of fiends, by familiarizing their children to unprovoked barbarity, and quenching the compunctions of nature by reiterated murders.[69]

The sense of conciliation expressed here lies in stark contrast with those reports that posited Amerindians as cunning belligerents. Instead, they are gullible, even childlike in their naivety, open to the malign influence of European powers.

In addition to accounts that held France responsible for encouraging Amerindian violence, allegations of French participation in those same acts could lead to even greater

[67] *London Magazine*, Jan. 1758, p. 692.
[68] Ibid., Jan. 1763, pp. 23-24.
[69] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1760, p. 462.

disquiet among commentators. A pamphlet from 1757 explained how the 'Canadians delight in blood, and in barbarity exceed, if possible, the very savages themselves.'[70] Similar remarks appeared in the *London Magazine*, which printed an address that General Wolfe had made during the Quebec campaign, 'the cruelties of the French against the subjects of Great Britain in America, would excuse the most severe reprisals; but Englishman are too generous to follow so barbarous an example'.[71] The juxtaposition with how British forces would treat the civilian populace was clear; the English 'offer to the Canadians the sweets of peace amidst the horrors of war'. Another piece from the same edition provided a lengthy rebuke of what it called the 'insolent perfidy' of the French, and drew parallels with their earlier actions where they were said to have 'insidiously conveyed many forces into North America, commenced hostilities against the British subjects, and committed insulting and injurious encroachments on the properties of the British Empire.'[72] Printed against the backdrop of a potential French invasion of Britain itself, public scrutiny of frontier violence in North America encouraged public scrutiny of French actions in that part of the world, but also much closer to the home.

In December 1755, the prominent theologian Thomas Gibbons published the latest in a series of widely read discourses.[73] Drawing on a sermon that had been delivered within the colonies, whose observations Gibbons 'heartily wished' to be reprinted for British readers, the essay re-iterated concerns that if something were not done to protect the colonial frontiers, they would be 'constantly exposed to all the barbarous cruelties' of the Indians.[74] An excerpt from a second source repeated the familiar anti-Indian tropes, describing how they had 'perpetrated the most unnatural barbarities upon many families in the frontiers, surprised them in their beds, beheaded or scalped them, mangled them, ripped up the women, and even drunk their blood, imbibing a more outrageous fury with the inhuman draught.' Crucially, however, Gibbons used these examples of 'barbarous usage' to draw parallels with the persecution of Protestants in France, presenting it as 'an insatiable wolf, with its jaws dropping with the blood of its own natives'. Furthermore, just as France had encouraged the Indians to commit violence in the colonies, so too did it cast

[70] Smith, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America*, p. 12.
[71] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, p. 568.
[72] Ibid., p. 526.
[73] Thomas Gibbons, *Sympathy with Our Suffering Brethren* (London, 1755) His earlier works give an indication of the extent to which his writings were familiar to a large audience. Published in 1750, *Juvenilia* contained a seventeen page subscription list which included the names of over four hundred individual, from merchants to priests to countesses.
[74] Gibbons, *Sympathy with Our Suffering Brethren*, p. iii-ix.

a 'cruel eye over to [Britain], and grows even wild and impatient until it can subdue us to its power, an event which must unavoidably be followed with the same havoc and slaughter.' Violence inflicted on the American settlements was no different to that experienced by the Huguenots, both demonstrations of Bourbon cruelty. Denigration of Indian violence was a vehicle for reinforcing Francophobe sentiment in a global sense. As previous studies have noted, 'this information was received by a public with a long national memory of French-Catholic persecution and cruelty in a never ending struggle to bring an end to Europe's prominent bastion of liberty and Protestantism.'[75] Yet just as news commentary often channelled popular outcry outwards against foreign rivals, so was it also focussed inwards, towards those who represented an internal challenge to British interests.

Challenges from Within

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, anti-ministerial material published in the wake of violent military defeats at as Monongahela or Oswego in 1756 used press coverage as a means of attacking government policy. The same was also true with accounts that detailed attacks committed against the civilian population. Yet where the Newcastle ministry came under scrutiny for the perceived mismanagement of military strategy, public interest with the frontier raids would focus a significant amount of scrutiny on to the colonies and the actions of the colonists themselves. A prominent theme expressed throughout the news press, for instance, was a demand that colonial officials take a more pro-active and coordinated approach to their own security. A sermon delivered by the prominent theologian Samuel Davies, re-printed in Britain in 1756, made specific reference to the plight of Virginians, declaring that 'many of our countrymen are stupidly insensible of their danger, and cannot exert themselves for their own defence until they are alarmed'.[76] Another pamphlet from 1757 made similar observations, and drawing attention to the numerous 'depredations' committed against the English settlements, blamed the provincial authorities for their failure to deal with these 'greater evils'. Indeed, local officials appeared more ready 'to cut each other's throats, and would (...) rather march out to fight one another, than the common enemy; they spend the time they might employ in the service of their country, in vilifying and distressing each other, in inserting low invectives,

[75] Milobar, 'Aboriginal Peoples and the British Press', p. 75; Stephen Conway, 'War and National Identity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Isles', *English Historical Review*, 116 (2001), p. 884; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 3rd ed. (London, 2005).
[76] Samuel Davies, *Virginia's Danger and Remedy* (Glasgow, 1756), p. iv.

unprofitable scurrility against each other, in their news papers'.[77] As a public perception, the failure of colonial legislatures to put aside their own petty disputes was as a major reason why frontier violence had not been contained.

The Quaker-led assembly in Pennsylvania would come under particular scrutiny.[78] A letter written by William Plumsted, Mayor of Philadelphia, appeared in the *Universal Magazine* in January 1756. Highlighting what he called the 'inhuman slaughter' of his fellow subjects, Plumsted criticised officials for having failed to establish and fund a permanent colonial militia, 'while you have been deliberating, much innocent blood hath been spilt, a great extent of our country laid waste, and the miserable inhabitants scattered abroad before the savage spoiler.'[79] A separate account agreed, declaring how 'the approach of winter brings the dreadful prospect of the continual increase of the inroads of those preying savages upon our inhabitants, unless a proper force is immediately provided to protect and defend them'.[80] Again, the same concerns appear in a later piece from 1759, which claimed that as the frontiers had been left defenceless, it had 'severely suffered, to the destruction of many of the poor inhabitants'.[81] Drawing attention to violence inflicted upon the civilian population gave what might otherwise have been routine criticisms of officials a greater sense of urgency, adding a human dimension to those situations.

Public discourse associated with frontier violence provided opportunities for factional rivalries within the colonies to play out on a larger, trans-Atlantic stage. Printed in London in 1756, *A Brief View of the Conduct of Pennsylvania* by prominent New York lawyer, William Smith Jnr., provided a lengthy rebuke of the Quakers - a reluctance to authorise funds for security, their alleged corruption, and apparent lack of support provided to Braddock during preparations for the Ohio campaign.[82] Yet it was violence committed against the back settlements, in particular, that served as justification for attacking the Pennsylvanian authorities, and in doing so brought those issues to the attention of British news audiences. Citing numerous examples of 'horrid barbarities', where 'men, women, children and brute beasts shared in one common destruction', the author argued that nothing was more ridiculous than for officials to equivocate at a time

[77] Anon, *The Military History of Great Britain,* p. 18.
[78] Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, pp. 192-201.
[79] *Universal Magazine*, Jan. 1756, p. 38.
[80] Ibid., p. 37.
[81] *London Magazine*, Oct. 1759, p. 532.
[82] William Smith, *A Brief View of the Conduct of Pennsylvania* (London, 1756).

when decisiveness was needed.[83] This, in his view, amounted to nothing more than an 'egregious and solemn trifling', with the lives and properties of the colonists. An anonymous publication printed in 1757, though also likely authored by Smith, attacked the New York governing council in similar fashion. It accused the Lieutenant Governor, James De Lancey, of being 'supercilious and sycophantic' and as having achieved a monopoly over provincial affairs 'by hints, by threats (...) dark insinuations and private cabals'.[84] Again, it charged William Johnson, Agent to the Iroquois League, with using his influence among Indian allies to ingratiate his own campaign against Crown Point, at the expense of a second and ultimately failed expedition against Fort Niagara. Such corruption, in the author's opinion, meant 'the barbarians were let loose from the wilderness, many thousand farms abandoned, the King's subjects inhumanly butchered, or reduced to beggary'.[85] The plight of the civilian population provided opportunities for commentators to present rivals as hubristic, inept, and having failed in their public duty. The reprinting of material originally written by colonial authors, however, was not simply a like-for-like reiteration of their opinions.

An individual in North America may send material across the Atlantic, but this did not mean it would necessarily remain in the same form, or generate the discussion they had originally anticipated. Excerpts from works produced by William Smith, for instance, appeared in the *Monthly Review* alongside editorial commentary that provided further exposition for British readers. Acknowledging that considerable space had been dedicated to this one particular issue, the editor in question stated that 'surely the vast importance, as well curiosity, of the subject' was reason enough for doing so. Arguing that details of the frontier raids were of 'no trivial concern', the piece concluded with the statement that it was impossible not to be moved by the distresses of the poor settlers:

> Who without any fault of their own, have been most cruelly plundered, tortured, murdered, by a diabolical enemy; and all this without having the power of resistance, or the benefit of that

[83] Smith, *A Brief View of the Conduct of Pennsylvania*, pp. 45-48, p. 52.
[84] Anon, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America*, pp. 21-28.
[85] Ibid., p. 107. Similar remarks were expressed in Anon, *A Complete History of the Present War* (London, 1761), pp. 58-59.

> protection they had a right to, from those to whom their protection was committed.[86]

Re-printing material in Britain could reframe colonial sources within an entirely different context, transforming what originally were local disputes into an issue of wider significance, one that affected a larger trans-Atlantic family. As a later author remarked on reading the account by Smith, 'New England lives by night and by day upon my mind; and to think that those brave men must fall a sacrifice to the treacherous principles of a colony of artful enthusiasts, is sufficient to make every breast that encloses not a heart of iron, glow with resentment.'[87] Yet just because the British press provided a platform for colonial sources did not mean they would go unquestioned.

The use of news commentary for political gain could be as prominent in the colonies as it was in Britain, and recognised as such. In 1757, the *Critical Review* stated that although the accounts provided by Smith were 'clear and distinct', they showed evidence of 'attachment to a party', which had lead the author 'to exaggerate the actions of his favourite, whose justification seems to have been the principal design of this performance'.[88] In a similar fashion, another account that sought to exhibit the 'cruelty and infidelity of the French, and their savage Indians', was criticised for not indicating where or by whom the piece had been written, the *Monthly Review* declaring 'the public ought to be told what authority [the details] come from. Anonymous publications, of this kind especially, ever will be, and ought to be, distrusted.'[89] William Burke showed a similar degree of scepticism when it came to sources from the colonies:

> Whatever is written by the English settled in our colonies, is to be read with great caution; because very few of them write without a bias to the interest of the particular province to which they belong, or perhaps to a particular faction in that province. It is only by comparing printed accounts with one another, and those

[86] *Monthly Review*, Mar. 1756, pp. 209-222; Silver, *Our Savage Neighbours*, p. 192. Smith's 1757 critique was printed in London before North America, and his 1756 rebuke of the Quakers, though initially sent as a private letter, was re-produced in Britain as an edited pamphlet.
[87] John Dove, *Plain Truth: Or, Quakerism Unmask'd* (London, 1756), p. 20.
[88] *Critical Review*, May 1757, p. 471.
[89] *Monthly Review*, Oct. 1757, p. 375.

> with the private information and correcting all by authentic matter of record, that one can discover the truth.[90]

As William Smith himself admitted, most commentators were engaged in the 'delusive colouring' of truth, 'either to serve some mean sinister party design, or to promote the views of some aspiring and ambitions minds.'[91] By those same means, however, public engagement with frontier violence became a medium through which prominent figures on both sides of the Atlantic could voice criticisms of political rivals, portraying them as a hindrance to British overseas interests.

The reporting of civilian casualties also allowed for the admonishment of British society as a whole, rather than just an individual person or government. Religious figures, in particular, interpreted the violence suffered by English settlers as a sign that God was angry at a sinful nation. As Samuel Davies argued following the violence unleashed by Monongahela:

> It would be of the greatest stupidity to groan under these calamities, without enquiries so far as to who is the proper original author of them (...) are we to trace the origin of the defeat of our army, no farther than the power or stratagems of the French or Indians? If this be the case, what a miserable world is this?[92]

The explanation offered was providence, 'the calamities we now feel, are the chastisements, or the judgments of [God's' fatherly, or vindictive hand.'[93] It was neither the French, nor Indians who were responsible for the violence in North America, but the decadence of Britons themselves. A 'divine judgement on a guilty people', as John Walsh and Stephen Taylor have outlined.[94] Coverage afforded to overseas atrocities provided the opportunity for inward reflection, in the hope of reforming moral behaviour. Peter Miller has made similar arguments, highlighting the traditional emphasis religious authorities placed on the idea of civic humanism, in turn, underpinned by a heavy focus on security,

[90] Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, p. a3.
[91] Smith, *A Review of the Military Operations in North America*, p. 2.
[92] Davies, *Virginia's Danger*, pp. 12-13.
[93] Samuel Davies, *Virginia's Danger and Remedy* (Glasgow, 1756), p. 13.
[94] John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the "Long' Eighteenth Century"', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, c.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 21.

public obligation, and communal responsibility.[95] The same was also true when it came to secular criticisms about the state of British society.

Public hostility towards the Quakers in America and their perceived failings in dealing with the frontier raids fed into a broader debate concerning the notion of British identity and civic-military virtue. As Bob Harris, among others, argues, an emerging popular culture promoted the 'subordination of the individual or selfish interests'.[96] Nowhere were these values more relevant or important than at time of war, the expectation Britons would demonstrate tenacity in battle and personal sacrifice for the national struggle. As with the vilification of Admiral Byng, following the capture of Minorca, news reports that focussed on the inability of Pennsylvanian authorities to protect English settlers were illustrations of a failure in civic responsibility. As an essay addressed to the Quaker community remarked, 'your unruly tempers respecting law, and pacific pretences respecting war, cannot be justified; the scalping and murders consequent upon the latter, notwithstanding your heavenly-mindedness, have blazoned your names in blood.'[97] Allegations of pacifism and timidity represented the very antithesis of what it meant to be British - masculine, bellicose, and selfless when it came to civic duty.[98] A personal commitment to non-violence, however principled, served no purpose if it did not serve the nation at large. Ironically, press coverage of frontier violence inflicted upon Britons served only to emphasise the sense of hypocrisy:

> Holy souls! No doubt they would not hurt a worm; but they will stand by and see the murdering arm lifted up, the fatal blow given, and rivers flow with innocent blood in abundance; families ruined, and children weltering in blood, persons scalped and destroyed, whom the laws of God and their country, they ought to have protected, or to have suffered their fate for neglecting it.[99]

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[95] Peter Miller, *Defining the Common Good. Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 127, pp. 150-213.
[96] Bob Harris, '"American Idols": Empire, War and the Middling Ranks in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Past & Present*, 150 (1996), pp. 119-120.
[97] Dove, *Plain Truth* p. v.
[98] See Michele Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', in Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (eds.), *English Masculinities 1660-1800* (London, 1999), pp. 44-61.
[99] Dove, *Plain Truth* p. 18.

In the decades after the Seven Years' War, the colonial population at large received similar criticism - the refusal to forfeit individual liberties in exchange for perceived security and effective governance, cited as evidence of the colonists failure to act in the 'common good'.[100] As noted already, studies that consider the breakdown in Anglo-American relations often focus on the period after the French and Indian conflict, yet evidence suggests the sense of estrangement, articulated via the press, had already started to emerge during those hostilities. As an account printed in 1755 stated, 'what a wild set of creatures our English men grow into, when they lose society, and it is surprising to think how many advantages they throw away, which our industrious countrymen would be glad of.'[101] Returning to the assertion made at the outset of the chapter, coverage afforded to frontier violence from 1754-64 would play a crucial role in articulating such themes. Indeed, news reports often fostered a sense of victimhood, but those same circumstances also became a means of stressing colonial culpability.

A Precedent for Later Antipathy

First, although commentary printed in Britain during the French and Indian War may indicate an emerging scepticism towards the colonies, the expression of such attitudes could also be a reflection of the geo-political climate at that time, rather than an outright critique. This was particularly true of reports printed in the later stages of the conflict. Following the Treaty of Paris, ratified early in 1763, a main priority for the Grenville Government was to establish effective governance over Britain's new acquisitions in America. A desire to secure lasting peace with the Indians, to integrate French Catholics in Quebec, and establish a permanent military presence in the colonies were seen as essential steps for maintaining security.[102] Reports that colonists appeared to be actively undermining those efforts, however, was a concern for the British Government. News of Amerindian violence that also drew attention to alleged colonial impropriety was as much a reflection of the emphasis Britain placed on its new strategic goals after February 1763, as demonstration of genuine anti-colonial sentiment. Yet there are various instances throughout the period 1754-64, some from the very outset, where public criticism of the colonies took place against a very different strategic context, one where British victory was by no means assured. Furthermore, in contrast with Jack Greene who argues that British

[100] Bob Harris, 'Review', *English Historical Review*, 111 (1996), pp. 1294-1295.
[101] Anon, *The Expedition of Major General Braddock to Virginia* (London, 1755), p. 13.
[102] Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Repression, Resistance and Revolt* (London, 2011), pp. 37-38.

audiences prior to 1763 'had yet to be sensitized to the moral costs of overseas empire', there are many examples throughout the French and Indian conflict where violence committed against the colonial population produced commentary that drew upon the very themes of humanity, justice, and probity.[103]

Public discourse throughout 1754-64 shows growing concern for North American affairs, but many commentaries also reveal considerable dissatisfaction with the colonists' role in bringing about those hostilities in the first place. An account from 1761 suggested that a chief reason why British interests had been placed in such jeopardy was the misplaced arrogance of the provincial assemblies, who 'exalted with notions of their superiority, did not consider that the French knowing their own inferiority, were resolved to make up, by the most unremitting diligence, what they wanted in point of numbers'.[104] Even stronger criticisms appeared when it came to the alleged mistreatment of the native population. A piece printed as early in the conflict as September 1755, explained how the French would not have been able to execute their designs upon the continent had the British settlers not alienated the Indians by 'making a grant of the Ohio lands, without their privity or consent.'[105] The ensuing violence, so the author argued, was a result of them having disposed of the Indian lands 'without any title to them, either of gift or purchase'. Such practices were said to have 'lost the warm hearts' of the natives, something the colonists could only win back by dropping all claims to Indian lands, and to only purchase them in accordance with the fair values Britain espoused. As the piece concluded, 'let us leave the unjustifiable act of taking the Indians lands by force to those who feel the weight of arbitrary power; for a Briton should be as tender of the liberty and property of other nations, as he is jealous of his own.' Indeed, for others the failure to show sufficient respect to the Amerindians had driven them towards the French. A publication from 1756, for instance, argued that France had gained influence over the savage nations primarily as a result of 'the ill conduct and unwise measures pursued by our countrymen there; at once despising and provoking the Savages, and thereby forcing them, as it were, into the arms of France'.[106] As a result, it was the French who had 'reaped all those advantages which result from a perfect knowledge of the country, from a readiness in harassing a frontier, from secrecy in marauding expeditions, and that dexterity at surprises which is the distinguishing

[103] Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, p. 18.
[104] Anon, *A Complete History of the Present War,* p. 60.
[105] *Universal Magazine*, Sept. 1755, pp. 115-116.
[106] Anon, *An Appeal to the Sense of the People* (London, 1756), p. 38.

characteristic of every savage nation.' The suffering of the colonists, according to such discourse, was entirely of their own making, an opinion often expressed whenever a fresh wave of violence was unleashed.

A piece by Samuel Johnson from 1759 is further demonstration of the prominent way that frontier violence could highlight the ill-treatment of Amerindians. Published in the *Idler*, a fictional account depicts an Indian leader watching the British conquest of Quebec from afar.[107] Turning to his people, the chief reminds them of a time when their ancestors 'were absolute Lords of the woods, the meadows and the lakes, wherever the eye can reach or the foot can pass'. Since then, the chief lamented that a new race of men had invaded the continent, 'slaughtering in their rage those that resisted, and those that submitted, in their mirth'. Johnson then criticises the hypocrisy of European settlers who boast of their humanity yet drive the Indians 'from every tract of ground where fertility and pleasantness invite them to settle'. This dishonest behaviour would not lead to the security of British interests, but further violence directed against the colonial settlers. Indeed, the piece concluded with a warning that Indians had learnt from the Europeans how to forge modern weapons and make war against them, the fictional chief claiming that 'when they shall be weakened with mutual slaughter, let us rush down upon them (...) and reign once more in our native country.' Such remarks would later appear prophetic, the outbreak of the Cherokee rebellion in 1760, and larger Pontiac uprising in 1763, bringing further reports of atrocities committed against the back settlements.

In contrast with a popular image that only focuses on the alleged barbarity of Amerindian raids, public discourse from the period often appears far more balanced in nature. An anonymous account from 1760 remarked how the 'barbarous ravages and massacres of the Indians', during the course of the present war, was a direct result of the 'impolitick treatment of them for many years past, and the tame and corrupt measures pursued by a late ministry, or rather confederacy against the honour and interest of their country.'[108] Others went further in their condemnation. A letter published in 1763 by the *St. James Evening Post* and re-printed in the *London Magazine* again blamed the fresh outbreak of hostilities on the Quaker community, who 'under the cloak of a pacific religion' had violated the treaties made between the Crown and the Indians for their own private

[107] 'The Idler. No. 82', in *Universal Chronicle*, 27 Oct. 1759, p. 345.
[108] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 279.

interests.[109] Despite reporting how the Indians had declared they would 'never lay down the hatchet until they can confine the whites within the Allegany mountain, or are themselves entirely extirpated', the threats appear understandable, even justified. Instead, it is the colonists who should be 'abhorred [for involving] the whole continent in a flame, the least spark of which they will not endeavour to quench!' Admittedly, not all commentators held this view. A subsequent edition of the *London Magazine*, for instance, printed the letter of a second author who rebuked the 'apparent ignorance' of the first account that had been published, and the 'gross absurdity' of suggesting the Quaker community had caused the 'commencement, or continuation of the Indian hostilities'.[110] Despite these differences in opinion, it is clear that many commentators did not approve of the colonists' actions, and were willing to use reports of atrocious acts of violence committed against those same individuals to express that dissatisfaction.

Many authors were keen to highlight occasions where the settlers had apparently been as violent towards Native Americans as they had towards the European population. In 1755, the *Gentleman's Magazine* printed a historical account of the famous Jamestown Massacre of 1622. Significantly, it blamed the violence not on the Indians but 'the ill behaviour of our people to the natives'.[111] The following year a similar piece appeared in the *London Magazine*, which described how the Pequot, as a nation, were entirely 'extirpated' by colonial forces, spreading such a terror among the remaining Indian nations that colonists 'met with little disturbance for many years after.'[112] The parallels between these situations, and those where European settlers had come under attack were striking. Crucially, these continued into the present conflict.

A declaration by Robert Morris, Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, printed by the *Gazetteer* in June 1756, detailed various outrages committed by the Delaware who had 'in a most cruel, savage and perfidious manner killed and butchered great numbers of the inhabitants.'[113] In response, however, Morris authorised violence of a similar scale, 'earnestly' requiring all of his majesty's subjects to 'embrace all opportunities of pursuing, taking, killing and destroying the said Delaware', although exempting any Indians allied to Britain from the threat of reprisal. Another account from 1757 alleged that provincial

[109] *London Magazine,* Nov. 1763, p. 607.
[110] Ibid., Dec. 1763, p. 688.
[111] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1755, p. 460.
[112] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1756, p. 72.
[113] *Gazetteer*, 10 Jun. 1756.

forces had attacked a native village, and set fire to the Indians' homes with their occupants still inside.[114] A subsequent report printed by the *London Magazine* paid even greater attention to this incident, describing how the colonists had resolved to 'repay these Indians in their own coin'.[115] As with the earlier account, it explained how the entire Indian village was put to the torch, 'those who endeavoured to escape the fire, fell by firearms, or by the screwed bayonet'. Summing up the ferocity of the attack, the author concluded that 'every man, woman, and child shared all the same fate; for we did not hear that our people brought away any prisoners; and it is probable, that by the late sufferings of their countrymen and relations, they were provoked to show no mercy to a merciless enemy. Although the English settlers lived in a dangerous part of the world and faced a threat ordinary Britons had no experience of, the sense of disappointment over how the colonists had responded to those circumstances was clear.

In many respects, reports of violence inflicted upon Amerindians often appeared far worse than incidents where English non-combatants were the victims, as an interesting letter addressed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1756 shows. Outlining how Native Americans were 'undoubtedly the most savage and uncultivated' of all nations, the author focussed his attention on the practice of scalping, referred to as 'a specimen of barbarity not to be paralleled'.[116] Though appearing at first to be a typical anti-Indian narrative, describing the violence of Amerindians as 'directly contrary to every sentiment of humanity', the latter half of the piece reveals a more nuanced argument. It acknowledged that scalping was a custom 'long established and deep rooted', and that, in effect, this represented a 'tolerable apology' for the present generation of Indians:

> For we are not to suppose, that this race of men is naturally more barbarous than the rest of mankind and that this, or any other mental quality is derived to them from the blood of their parents but from their manners usages, examples etc., causes which in all countries operate alike under the same circumstances.[117]

The author, however, went further, blaming not just tradition or culture for the Indian love of violence, but the British colonists who continued to promote such a vicious mentality

[114] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1757, p. 75.
[115] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, pp. 288-89.
[116] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1756, p. 132.
[117] Ibid.

among them. Asking his readers 'what possible excuse can be devised for the encouragement given by Christians to this execrable kind of barbarity', the author exclaimed that he was 'shocked beyond measure' at the size of premiums being offered by the provincial authorities for enemy scalps. Imploring his colonial brethren to only employ Indians who would use 'methods of war practised among civilised nations', it was hoped this would dissuade the French from promoting the same 'horrid kind of butchery' among their own savages, nor aggravate them 'to retaliate upon us an hundred fold.' Indeed, the earlier declaration by Robert Morris indicated the extent of such behaviour:

> For the scalp of every male Indian enemy, above the age of 12 years, produced as evidence of their being killed, the sum of one hundred and thirty pieces of eight (...) For the scalp of every Indian woman, produced as evidence of their being killed, the sum of fifty pieces of eight.[118]

The moral implications of these actions were of particular concern. Scalping and the 'abominable' encouragement afforded to it by the colonists, was as comparable to the 'venial sin' of murder.[119] A similar view was expressed by another account the following year, complaining how the colonists had raised the bounty on Indian scalps ‘against a free people, and even in their own country, that the English exercise these cruelties. What is the crime these savages are to be charged with? The defence of their country and of their allies; of their liberties and lives’.[120] By condoning such behaviour the settlers were guilty of the same unlawful acts, a sentiment shared by those who associated the British colonists with transportation and, as Greene argues, people of low social origins.[121]

Press coverage of frontier violence provided various opportunities to reinforce the idea of colonial criminality. A report printed by the *Whitehall Evening Post*, for instance, explained how one John Connolly had murdered a family of friendly Indians, before trying surreptitiously to claim the bounty on their scalps by passing them off as belonging to enemy forces.[122] Similar accusations of colonial wrongdoing appeared towards the end of the French and Indian conflict, during the infamous Paxton Riots. Following the purported

[118] *Gazetteer*, 10 Jun. 1756.
[119] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1756, p. 132.
[120] Ibid., Jun. 1757, p. 254.
[121] Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, p. 77.
[122] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 12 Aug. 1756.

massacre of a Conestoga village by a group of vigilantes, the *Scots Magazine* printed an account by Benjamin Franklin who described how the 'poor defenceless creatures were immediately fired upon, stabbed, and hatcheted to death (...) scalped, and otherwise horribly mangled.'[123] Such details, more typically associated with an Indian raid, portray the colonial mob as miscreants, engaging in unlawful acts of violence. The account went on to report how local magistrates had attempted provide sanctuary to another group of friendly natives, who had fled to Lancaster for protection, only for a crowd to gain entry to their place of refuge:

> The children clinging to the parents; fell on their knees, protested their innocence, declared their love to the English, and that, in their whole lives, they had never done them injury: and in this posture they all received the hatchet! Men, women, and little children were everyone inhumanly murdered in cold blood![124]

Another article attempted to justify this expression of 'manifest resentment' by claiming the continual incursions of the savages in the preceding years had rendered the frontier settlers utterly desperate.[125] An anonymous letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* expressed similar views, arguing that although the editor had previously given 'a very affecting account of the murder of the Indians (...)at the same time justice requires that some notice should be taken of the provocations that led to it'.[126] A lengthy account followed, defending the violence as an unavoidable response to the 'horrid cruelties that had been exercised (...) upon their nearest relations and dearest friends'. Some commentators were evidently willing to give the settlers the benefit of the doubt, in terms of the intense pressures they laboured under. Indeed, Daniel Richter describes such justifications and the sense of equivalence they created, as a result of 'parallel campaigns of ethnics cleansing', instigated by Indians and Europeans alike.[127]

Despite attempts to understand the pressures of frontier life, the 'Paxton Boys' were largely condemned in British news reports. Tobias Smollet would later write how the 'harmless, hospitable behaviour' of the Conestoga could not protect them 'from a massacre

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[123] *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1764, p. 174.
[124] Ibid.
[125] *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1764, p. 175.
[126] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jun. 1764, p. 263.
[127] Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (London, 2001), p. 190.

almost unheard of among Christians'.[128] Another account, written in the style of a biblical passage, imagined Abraham as having invited a stranger into his tent to share a meal, before casting him out into the night on discovering the man was in fact a heathen.[129] The Lord then chastised Abraham, declaring 'have I borne with [the Indian] these hundred ninety and eight years, and nourished him and clothed him, notwithstanding his rebellion against me; and could'st not thou, that art thyself a sinner, bear with him but one night.' The message was clear; the colonists should demonstrate their Christian values and embrace the Indians as subjects of God. Press coverage of the Lancaster riots expressed a broader sentiment as to how Britain, the foremost colonial power by 1764, should conduct itself. As fellow Britons, the colonists should uphold the standards and enlightened values espoused by the mother nation, even in the face of extreme hardship. As the account by Benjamin Franklin exclaimed, 'we pretend to be Christians, and from the superior light we enjoy, ought to exceed Heathens, Turks, Saracens, Moors, Negroes, and Indians, in the knowledge and practice of right.'[130] News reports which showed the colonists choosing to ignore these principles and readily engaging in the same brutal practices as Britain's enemies reflect an image of increasing disparity between Britons at home and their overseas brethren. Indeed, this idea of an abnormal people 'fixated upon material wealth, without humanity, unconscionably cruel to their servants and slaves, and sexually loose', was for many in Britain already a long-held opinion.[131] Crucially, reports of violence committed during the French and Indian War appeared to provide further evidence of this pariah society. As an anonymous account printed after the defeat at Monongahela noted:

> What is excessively disagreeable here is, that the wealth of the country consists in Slaves, so that all one eats rises out of driving and whipping these poor wretches; this kind of authority corrupts the mind of the masters, and makes them so overbearing, that they are the most troublesome company upon the Earth.[132]

Evidence of this alterity lies in stark contrast with those such as Eliga Gould who see the wars of the mid-century as a point of convergence for the English-speaking Atlantic. Although others, including Stephen Conway, believe the formation of public opinion was by

[128] Tobias Smollett, *Continuation of the Complete History of England*. Vol 5. (London, 1765), p. 323
[129] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Apr. 1764, p. 155.
[130] Ibid., p. 175.
[131] Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, pp. 70-83.
[132] Anon, *The Expedition of Major General Braddock* p. 6.

no means a linear process, there is broad agreement that British perceptions of the colonists did not change fundamentally until the 1770s, and only in light of explicit challenges to British authority.[133] Increased interest with North American affairs throughout the early eighteenth century, however, combined with a long held view that emigration to the colonies was a choice of last resort, laid the ground for later humanitarian critiques.[134] Press exposure afforded to frontier violence committed throughout 1754-64 would help to nurture those themes.

Public engagement during the French and Indian War, specifically with news of attacks made against British settlers, reinforces the idea of fluid and surprisingly critical discourse concerning North American affairs. Far from a popular image that posited Amerindian raids solely in terms of a savage enemy who stood in the way of British interests, press coverage shows that domestic perceptions went beyond a framework that focussed solely on an anti-Indian sublime or one explained by a post-1764 imperial context alone. As James Ogden stated in 1761; 'and well on Indian faith we may depend, a savage enemy, or steady friend.'[135] Further indication of the dynamism that characterised discussion of overseas expansion from 1754-64, specifically the violence associated with it, is demonstrated by attention afforded to the parallel conflicts taking place in Bengal throughout the same period, as the remainder of this study will expl

[133] Conway Stephen Conway, 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783', *William Mary Quarterly*, 59 (2002), pp. 66-72; Peter J. Marshall, 'Who Cared About the Colonies? Some Evidence from Philanthropy', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 27 (1999), pp. 208-22.
[134] Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, ch. 2.
[135] Ogden, *British Lion Rous'd*, p. 108.

SECTION THREE

INDIA: THE WAR IN BENGAL, 1756-64

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BLACK HOLE AND PUBLIC EXPOSURE BEFORE 1764

The Seven Years' War transformed modest English footholds on the Indian sub-continent into the foundations of what would become the hub of British imperial power in the Eastern hemisphere. The conflicts in Bengal, the Carnatic, and along the Malabar Coast, saw British influence increase exponentially throughout the region but also marked the beginning of a newfound public interest with the East India Company and their actions in India.[1] As with the hostilities fought in North America from 1754-64, the war in India featured a variety of hostile encounters between Britons and indigenous forces that were subsequently reported throughout the British news press. Yet where popular perceptions had framed Amerindian society as one that was fundamentally savage in nature, the native cultures of India appeared instead as established civilisations, with governing institutions and an approach to military conflict more in tune with European expectations.[2] This variation helped to shape the way British commentators interpreted the conflict and acts of violence committed during it. Instead of frontier raids carried out by marauding bands of barbarians, reports of alleged transgressions were largely presented as the fault of oriental despots, depicted as cruel, degenerate, but also inherently weak. Public interest with episodes such as the Black Hole of Calcutta or the Patna Massacre of 1763 reinforced this image of India as a collection of failing states, governed by intemperate local rulers. In the same way, however, that events in North America from 1754-64 are often treated as a starting point for later developments in the eighteenth century, studies that consider violence committed in India throughout the same period tend to focus on how later generations interpreted those circumstances, rather than reactions expressed at the time.

In the decades after the Seven Years' War, Company officials such as Robert Orme published works describing the Mughal Court as effeminate, obsessed with luxury, and possessing only an illusory authority over the country; a 'fragmented empire' in terminal decline.[3] Company intervention, by contrast, represented an apparent solution to that unrest, establishing coherence, stability, and security. These early pro-intervention

[1] P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford, 2009), ch. 4. British East India Company hereafter referred to as 'Company'.
[2] See Chapter Two.
[3] Robert Orme, *History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (London, 1773). See also Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600 -1800* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 111-114.

narratives, however, would come under growing scrutiny in 1770s and 1780s with allegations of corruption and humanitarian abuses feeding an increased metropolitan scepticism of British overseas expansion.[4] Yet as studies by Kate Telscher, and most recently Partha Chatterjee all show, the violent circumstances of 1754-64 continued to be subject to changing re-interpretations well into the nineteenth and twentieth century.[5] Following the impeachment of Warren Hastings in 1788, for instance, earlier narratives that championed the benefits of Company rule in India would gradually evolve into a more complex notion of a British civilising mission. As Rebecca Brown argues, memorialisation of events in India 'shifts as colonialism itself changes, (…) the monument does not simply reflect history, it participates in shaping it'; the same is also true of public discourse.[6] Similar themes are explored by Betty Joseph, whose examination of Company archives draws attention to the emergence of a literary genre that utilised the trauma of events from the Seven Years' War era, what she describes as an 'individualised discourse of sensibility'.[7] Few, however, have explored how news commentators responded to the East Indies conflict prior to 1765, before either increased criticism of the Company or providential imagery of a British imperial destiny had firmly taken hold in the popular imagination. The following chapters address this issue.

Previous research such as that carried out by Linda Colley, concluded that accounts relating to India printed before 1765 were not only unrepresentative of wider contemporary opinion, but that public interest with the East Indies, more generally, did not gain significant traction until the 1770s.[8] Peter J. Marshall shares this opinion, stating that although public awareness of British involvement in India during the early eighteenth century is difficult to assess, the restricted press coverage suggests it was certainly limited in nature compared with the attention North America received throughout the same

[4] Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 120-121; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (London. 2006), pp. 1-5; Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: the British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007).

[5] Kate Teltscher, '"The Fearful Name of the Black Hole": The Fashioning of an Imperial Myth', in Bart Moore-Gilbert (ed.), *Writing India, 1757-1990* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 30-51; Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (California, 2012), pp. 1-33.

[6] Rebecca M. Brown, 'Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case Study of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial', *Journal of Asian Studies,* 65 (2006), p. 110.

[7] Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago, 2004), pp. 63-67. See also, Kathleen Wilson, 'Old Imperialisms and New Imperial Histories: Rethinking the History of the Present', *Radical History Review,* 95 (2006), pp. 211–34.

[8] Linda Colley, 'Going Native, Telling Tales: Captivity, Collaborations and Empire', *Past & Present*, 168 (2000); Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London, 2002), pp. 241-296.

period.[9] Analysis of material identified in earlier collections such as that compiled by J.C Hill in 1905, has reinforced this view of a narrow engagement with Indian affairs.[10] The issue, however, is that although these older collections are useful, they are by no means a complete record of news polemic produced during the period. As this chapter will show, a more holistic analysis of commentary produced throughout 1754-64 reveals not only a more extensive range of material but evidence of a broader sense of public engagement with the East Indies conflict, articulated by exposure afforded to acts of violence committed over the course of those hostilities.

Different Conflict, Different Coverage

Compared with the French and Indian War, reports of violence committed in the East Indies throughout 1754-1764 were undoubtedly less frequent or explicit in terms of their appearance and analysis in the news press. As discussed, the defeat of Braddock in 1755 marked a significant turning point for public engagement with North American affairs. For the remainder of that conflict, news commentators poured over all aspects of the hostilities taking place there, reporting and expressing opinions concerning the strategic situation, the combatants involved, the political ramifications, and the violent raids committed against the colonial population. The focus of press interest with the war in India, however, was fundamentally different. The reasons why, as outlined in Chapter Two, were varied, ranging from the manifest commercial nature of British possessions in the east at that time, to the logistical fact that news from India could take between six and twelve months to reach metropolitan audiences in Europe.[11] As the *Annual Register* for 1761, stated:

> It is certain, that the period of this war in the East Indies, has been marked by as many striking events, uncommon circumstances, and singular reverses of fortune, as any that have happened from the time of our knowledge of this part of the world. We are sorry that the accounts we have hitherto had are so broken and

[9] Marshall, *Making and Unmaking of Empires*, pp. 156-157.
[10] S. C. Hill (ed.), *Bengal in 1756-1757: Indian Records Series* Vol. III (London, I905), pp. 69-116. The collection identifies a number of news sources relating to the fall of Calcutta in 1756. Predominately focussed on newspapers and magazines, the publications range from Jun. 1757 – Oct. 1757. The collection does include a copy of the Holwell narrative, published at the beginning of 1758, but for the most part only contains news polemic printed up to the end of 1757.
[11] Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, p. 126.

> imperfect, that it is impossible to treat of them in a manner in the least suitable to their dignity and importance.[12]

Similar apologies appeared in a later edition, printed towards the end of the conflict:

> The affairs of India have been omitted for some time in our register, on account of the imperfections, obscurity and contradictions in the relation of them, which had been made public. Though they are not in all respects, thoroughly cleared, yet enough has appeared in the course of this year to engage us to resume them, and to treat of the events there as much at large as is consistent with our plan in conducting this history.[13]

Sporadic, often unverified reports from the far side of the world, made hostilities in India a challenging subject for news print to convey coherently and in such a way as to make it seem relevant to readers at home.

In addition to practical constraints, compared with the numerous accounts written and disseminated by British settlers during the French and Indian War, press coverage of events taking place in the East Indies was largely dependent on an exchange of correspondence between Ministers and Royal officers serving there.[14] Public analysis, in turn, rather than focussing specifically on the issue of violence as a subject in its own right, was predominately framed by details of whatever military engagements were being reported in those dispatches, such as the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the capture of Fort St. David in 1758, or the capitulation of Pondicherry in 1761. Of greater significance, however, as to why news of atrocities committed in India was not as prevalent or prominent as reports from North America were, is due to the underlying nature of the conflict itself.

In many respects, the British military approach in India was comparable to that adopted in North America. Just as British forces forged various Native American alliances to challenge French expansion in the Ohio Valley, the Company followed a similar pattern in how it negotiated with, sponsored, and where necessary challenged rival principalities

[12] *Annual Register of the Year 1761*, (London, 1762), p. 57.
[13] *Annual Register of the Year 1764* (London, 1765), p. 34.
[14] Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, pp. 156-157.

across the Indian sub-continent.[15] To remove French influence along the Coromandel Coast, the Madras Presidency bankrolled the formation of a Carnatic state under Muhammad Ali Khan. In Bengal, a series of dramatic interventions that deposed three Nawabs in quick succession helped to secure monopoly trade rights throughout the province. Finally, on the west coast the Bombay Presidency supported local Maratha rulers to defeat the piratical state of Tulagee Angria.[16] The eastern theatre of the Seven Years' War was as much a series of British-backed domestic conflicts as it was a clearly defined intra-European confrontation, feeding into the idea of a 'negotiated Empire' as described by Travers and Greene.[17] Yet despite similarities in the way Britain interjected itself into these regional disputes, the military context in which British agents in India operated from 1754-64 was very different to the situation faced in North America. This distinction is crucial when exploring how news commentators engaged with reports of violence printed during those hostilities.

Whereas the French and Indian conflict was characterised by violent asymmetric warfare carried out against the backdrop of an inaccessible wilderness, in many respects the eastern conflict bore closer resemblance to a traditional European campaign. The British, French, and Dutch each fielded professionally trained armies that engaged in conventional set piece encounters, and although the majority of those troops were drawn from the indigenous population, referred to as Sepoys, the broader tactics and environment in which they operated were framed by commentators in relatively familiar terms.[18] As an account from 1757 stated:

> These soldiers are called Sepoys, who have their proper officers with the titles in the county language, all however under the orders of the English. They use muskets, at which they are

[15] R. K. Ray, 'Colonial Penetration and the Initial Resistance of the Mughal Ruling Class: The English East India Company and the Struggle for Bengal 1756-1800', *Indian Historical Review*, 12 (1985), pp. 1-105.
[16] Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, ch. 4; Jos Gommans and Jitske Kuiper, 'The Surat Castle Revolutions: Myths of an Anglo-Bania Order and Dutch Neutrality, C. 1740-1760', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 10 (2006), pp. 361-389; Jon Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos Empire* (London, 2016), pp. 50-60.
[17] Travers, *Ideology and Empire,* p. 41; Amy T. Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, 'Peripheries, Centres, and the Construction of Early Modern American Empires: An Introduction', in Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (eds.), *Centres and Peripheries in the American World, 1500-1820* (New York, 2002), p. 6.
[18] Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, p. 142; Colley, *Captives*, pp. 256-257. G. J. Bryant, in contrast, argues that British forces did face a degree of asymmetry with the larger forces deployed by their Mughal counterparts. Compared with Amerindian warfare, however, the differences were arguably modest in comparison. See Byrant, 'Asymmetric Warfare: The British Experience in Eighteenth century India', *Journal of Military History*, 68 (2004), pp. 434-435.

> indifferently expert; but they are chiefly armed in the country manner, with sword and target (...) Their pay is but small, comparatively to the Europeans; and yet they are on many occasions very serviceable from their immurement to the climate, and diet of the country; and are rarely known to misbehave or give way, if they are well led and encouraged by the example of the Europeans, with whom they are joined.[19]

The socio-political dynamics underpinning military conflict in India were also more relatable compared with those perceived as driving North American warfare - the Amerindian obsession with blood feuds, scalping, torture, and captivity were if not unfathomable, certainly considered primitive in terms of legitimate motivations for a modern military confrontation. In contrast, dynastic struggles, territorial expansion, religious division, competition over markets, and the collection of land revenue, were all issues relevant to the situation in India yet easily recognisable to British news readers, having fuelled hostilities in Europe for centuries. The result was a conflict, which in spite of its geographic detachment from day-to-day affairs, exotic location, and sporadic coverage afforded to it, could still be engaged with by commentators as something that appeared sufficiently 'European' in nature.

Wartime violence committed in India was not as pressing an issue for public discussion as it was when reported to have taken place in North America, in part, because the apparent distinctiveness of the American conflict helped to eclipse its eastern counterpart. This helps to explain why previous studies have argued that India did not feature as a prominent item of news before 1764; as Colley states, 'if Britons in India sometimes suffered, Britons at home had no great desire - and would not have until the late 1780s - to read about or identify with their sufferings'.[20] Yet as already outlined, not only do these conclusions rely on a relatively small sample of material, they also only consider circumstances that received explicit attention from British commentators. A main reason, for instance, why the Black Hole affair is often thought to be a 'conspicuous exception' in terms of its prominence, is precisely that other situations which did not

[19] John Henry Grose, *A Voyage to the East-Indies* (London, 1757), pp. 61-62.
[20] Colley, *Captives*, p. 255. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, p. 156 makes similar observations, highlighting the Hill Collection as indication of the limited amount of material that appeared in the British press.

receive as lurid coverage have been largely overlooked.[21] Yet just because commentary may have been more subtle or nuanced in how it approached the East Indies conflict is not sufficient reason to dismiss that material outright. Instead, a re-examination of press coverage produced from 1756-64 suggests a broader engagement with violent occurrences taking place in India at that time. In much the same way, therefore, that public scrutiny afforded to certain aspects of the French and Indian conflict was able to convey a variety of opinions and attitudes concerning overseas expansion, so too was it the case with the eastern theatre of the Seven Years' War.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on a re-appraisal of coverage afforded to the Black Hole affair. If the chief aim is to consider largely overlooked material it might seem counterintuitive to re-visit the one event that existing studies repeatedly highlight as having achieved a certain degree of notoriety. As a starting point, however, it is useful to re-examine the Black Hole of Calcutta precisely for that reason, because in dismissing the event and public interest it generated as something that was largely anomalous, previous research has not taken into account the full extent of press engagement with the episode. In doing so, this chapter will show that if the most prominent event from the conflict has failed to attract sufficient scrutiny, then other, less familiar episodes from the period are also likely to have been ignored. The result is a misleading picture of what in reality was a complex and vibrant culture of public engagement.

The Black Hole of Calcutta: A Re-examination

The Black Hole affair took place in June 1756 against the backdrop of a rapidly escalating dispute between Company agents in Bengal and Siraj-ud-Daulah, the local Nawab who had become ruler earlier that year. In response to increased competition from rival European interests and a desire to consolidate its own trading rights, the Company had started to expand its economic and military operations throughout the region.[22] Keen to assert his own authority, however, and wishing to chastise the British for their refusal to pay sufficient trade duties, in June 1756 Siraj-ud-Daula 'marched with all his forces, consisting of 70,000 horse and foot to Calcutta, threatening to drive all the English out of the country', as an account in the *Literary Magazine* later reported.[23] A factory at Cossimbuzar was the

[21] Colley, *Captives*, p. 255.
[22] Richard Gott, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London, 2011), pp. 39-42.
[23] *Literary Magazine*, May 1757, p. 223.

first to fall, quickly followed by the main British outpost in Calcutta, Fort William. News reached Britain almost a year later and caused shock throughout the press, particularly those details relating to the face of the garrison. Reports explained that numerous British captives, including women and children, had been confined to a small cell within the fort referred to as the 'Black Hole', and forced to endure stifling conditions over the course of a hot summer night.[24] When the Mughal soldiers returned the following day, 123 of the 146 alleged to have entered the cell had supposedly perished from a combination of asphyxiation and dehydration. A few months later, a Royal Navy flotilla under the command of Vice-Admiral Charles Watson, in conjunction with a Company backed army led by Robert Clive, re-captured Calcutta and forced the Nawab to sign a peace treaty accepting culpability. Conflict between the Company and Siraj-ud-Dualah would soon erupt again, however, leading to his defeat at the Battle of Plassey in June 1757. This time, the British would replace the Nawab with a rival claimant, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, something commentators quickly came to refer as the 'First Revolution' in Bengal. These events formed the broader context that framed public engagement with the Black Hole affair throughout the Seven Years' War.

Initial research into the Black Hole episode tended to focus almost exclusively on the issue of veracity.[25] As a study by Brijen Gupta asserted, 'the question is not whether the Black Hole confinements took place. They did. The question is how many people were confined, how many of them survived, and were they all men'.[26] Although Gupta went on to conduct a thorough investigation of the event, demonstrating how the number of persons involved was likely to have been considerably less than reported, analysis of press reaction to those circumstances remained mostly absent. A shift in interest has taken place with more recent studies, such as those by Jan Dalley or Iris MacFarlane, yet most have restricted their focus to a single account produced by John Zephaniah Holwell, whose *Genuine Narrative* printed in 1758 formed the basis for the Black Hole legend.[27] A member and later president of the governing council at Fort William, Holwell had assumed command of the garrison after the other Company officials abandoned the settlement in

[24] Brijen, Gupta, 'The Black Hole Incident', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 19 (1959), pp. 53-56; Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*, pp. 2-33.
[25] Early studies include Iris MacFarlane, *The Black Hole: The Makings of a Legend* (London, 1975); Henry Dodwell, *Dupleix and Clive* (London, 1920); C. R. Wilson, *Old Fort William* (London, I906); J. H. Little, 'The Black Hole: Question of Holwell's Veracity', *Bengal Past and Present*, 9 (1915), pp. 75-104.
[26] Gupta, 'The Black Hole Incident', p. 56.
[27] Jan Dalley, *The Black Hole: Money, Myth And Empire* (London, 2006); Iris MacFarlane, *The Black Hole: The Makings of a Legend* (London, 1975).

advance of Siraj-ud-Daulah's arrival. As one of those who survived the Black Hole, Holwell would go on to publish a harrowing account of his incarceration, emphasising in stark detail the appalling conditions he and his fellow captives experienced. Recalling, for instance, the 'cries and ravings' of those who were pushed to the rear and most stifling part of the cell, Holwell described how they were forced into drinking the sweat from each other's clothes:

> This plunderer I found afterwards was a worthy young gentleman, (...) one of the few who escaped from death and since paid me the compliment of assuring me, he believed he owed his life to the many comfortable draughts he had from my sleeves.[28]

The distressing account gets worse with the author admitting that he was eventually forced into drinking his own urine to quench his thirst, stating how 'it was so intensely bitter there was no enduring a second taste'. These traumatic descriptions of scenes that were said to be 'so full of misery and horror that the boldest imagination would not date to feign them', meant the Holwell account enjoyed significant public exposure when first published in early 1758.

Frequently treated as the chief source of information for the Black Hole affair, historians have afforded considerable scrutiny to the language, reliability, and motivations of Holwell. Yet in doing so, this one account, and the themes expressed therein, has overshadowed the full extent of public engagement with the Black Hole episode as a news event. Recent historiography gives an indication of this trend. A study by Ian. J. Barrow, for instance, acknowledges the wider impact caused by the fall of Calcutta, but mainly focuses on the Holwell narrative and the personal agenda that lay behind its release. Barrow sees the account not as something that was meant for the attention of society at large, but instead represented a more personal appeal to the Company directors 'to make it plain to those in London who controlled his future employment that the final wrong to be righted (...) was his restoration to a position of authority.'[29] Research by Partha Chatterjee is similar, explaining how the predominant theme conveyed by Holwell is not the brutal treatment of those involved, but the perceived importance of 'mental self-discipline' and

[28] John Z. Holwell, *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentleman and Others who were suffocated in the Black Hole* (London, 1758). pp. 23-25.
[29] Ian J. Barrow, 'The Many Meanings of the Black Hole of Calcutta', in Kate Brittlebank (ed.), *Tall Tales and True: India, Historiography and British Imperial Imaginings* (Victoria, 2008), pp. 7-18.

moral courage when faced with severe hardship.[30] Chatterjee does attempt to situate the narrative within the broader context of an emerging discourse concerning overseas expansion, arguing that its purpose was the 'moral education of the British people (...) a call for the imperial nation to civilize itself before taking on the task of civilizing others'. Yet as with the Barrow study, Chatterjee still relies principally on the Holwell account when postulating the trajectory of British views relating to India in the late-eighteenth century. Again, the approach taken by Colley is largely the same, also leading to a similar outcome - exploring the Black Hole affair near entirely through the prism of a single captivity narrative disregards its full significance as an item of news and subject for public discussion during the Seven Years' War.[31]

In contrast with previous studies, this chapter treats the Black Hole affair as an item of overseas news, not simply a dramatic backdrop for a single literary escapade. The Holwell account was one element of a more extensive public engagement with the event and reports of violence associated with it. An immediate consequence of this change in focus is that even the Holwell narrative, itself, appears to have received far greater attention throughout the period than previously suggested. In addition to printing excerpts from the account, newspapers also promoted it extensively. The *Public Advertiser*, for instance, announced in January 1758 how the narrative would soon be available to purchase, and then printed the same notification in the next two editions.[32] Although repeated advertisements of this sort were not uncommon, many of the notices relating to Holwell's account mention how fuller versions and analysis would also be available in a variety of periodical magazines. The *London Chronicle*, for example, commented how an 'extremely affecting' account would be available to read in that month's edition of *The Grand Magazine of Universal Intelligence*, demonstrating the interconnected and reciprocal nature of news print at that time, but also how the narrative enjoyed promotion across the press more generally.[33]

The periodical magazine coverage is particularly insightful due to the additional editorial observations that often appeared. Although some publications simply reprinted the Holwell account verbatim, such as the *Scots Magazine* which explained the

[30] Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*, pp. 25-26.
[31] Colley, *Captives*, p. 255.
[32] *Public Advertiser***,** 26-28 Jan. 1758.
[33] *London Chronicle*, 4 Mar. 1758, Similar adverts appear in *Public Advertiser,* 3 Mar. 1758, *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 3 Mar. 1758.

impassioned reasons given by the author had 'induced them to insert it entire', other titles provided parallel commentary, embellishing specific aspects of the circumstances described by Holwell.[34] The *Gentleman's Magazine* drew particular attention to the size of the dungeon, and expanded on the initial descriptions with some specific dimensions of its own:

> The floor of the place in which they were confined being 18 feet by 18 feet, contained 324 square feet, which divided by 146, the number of persons, gives a space of something more that 26 inches and a half by 12 for person, which reduced to a square will be near 18 inches by inches.[35]

By including their own calculations, the editors accentuated the dramatic impact of the original account by underlining the severe conditions faced by Holwell and his colleagues. In a similar fashion, both the *Newcastle General Magazine* and *Literary Magazine* used comparable descriptions to explain how 'from accounts lately made public, it is known, that one hundred and twenty three were smothered in the black hole prison' and that the narrative provided 'a simple detail of this most melancholy event, delivered in the genuine language of sincere concern'.[36] Though repeating many of the same phrases used by other publications as well as the account itself, the *London Magazine* also noted how:

> No tyrant ever could devise a more torturing, cruel death, than these poor wretches suffered; and this relation is dictated by genuine, a tender, and mournful sensibility, of what the writer and what his companions experienced on that dreadful night. We should think ourselves inexcusable, not to give our readers some extracts from this letter; tho', as it cannot well abridged, they will take up more room than we usually afford to a single article.[37]

The variety of news sources that advertised, reproduced, or reviewed the Holwell narrative indicates that it achieved a significant degree of press attention when it first entered print. Of greater interest, however, is not that it enjoyed exposure when initially published, but

[34] *Scots Magazine*, Feb. 1758, p. 77.
[35] *Gentleman's Magazine,* Feb. 1758, p. 70.
[36] *Newcastle General Magazine*, Feb. 1758, p. 90; *Literary Magazine*, Feb. 1758, p. 63.
[37] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1758, p. 83.

that it continued to attract interest from commentators and inform public discourse well beyond January 1758.

Despite the initial popularity, Colley has previously argued that no further editions of the Holwell account appeared throughout the mid-eighteenth century.[38] This has supported a broader conclusion that British audiences did not consider the account, or the event it described, to be of particular significance until a later period. One explanation offered is the apparent lack of patriotic identification with Company agents, who because of their distance from Britain were seen as a greedy and unrepresentative of the nation of at large, 'alien in terms of their reputed behaviour, and altogether unworthy of much sympathy.'[39] This was certainly true in the decades after the Seven Years' War, where the increased visibility of so-called 'Nabobs' in British public life would attract distain and criticism for flaunting their newfound and ill-gotten wealth. Yet the extent to which a strong sense of alienation and disinterest with Indian affairs existed before 1765 is debatable, particularly as Colley is mistaken in her assertion that details of Holwell's account only appeared in print during one year of the period in question.

The 1759 edition of the *Annual Register* saw the Holwell narrative as sufficiently noteworthy to be included in their most recent history of affairs, stating 'we have not confined ourselves wholly to publications of this last year (...) but have collected from those of the preceding, such as thought most memorable'.[40] The September 1760 edition of *Read's Weekly Jou*rnal provided a summary of the East Indies conflict and referred specifically to the Holwell narrative, noting how a full account by the man who 'bravely resolved to defend the place, after it had been forsaken by the governor (…) the reader may see in one of our former papers'.[41] The same is true of a larger work published in 1761, which included details of the capture of Fort William and an account of 'shocking barbarity, in terms so pathetic and moving as cannot fail drawing pity from the most obdurate and savage breast'.[42] That same year the *Monthly Review* stated how 'the dreadful story of the Black Hole' was probably already familiar to every reader by that point but those 'who may not recollect the circumstances of that horrid transaction, are referred to Mr Holwell's

[38] Colley, *Captives*, pp. 255-256.
[39] Ibid.
[40] *Annual Register of the year 1758* (London, 1759), p. 278.
[41] *Read's Weekly Journal*, 20 Sept. 1760.
[42] Anon, *A Complete History of the War in India* (London, 1761), p. 18.

Narrative, of which mention is made in the XVIIIth Vol of our review'.[43] Similar remarks appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which reported the arrival of a ship from India carrying Holwell and described him as the former governor of Bengal who had written 'an account of the sufferings of the people in the Black Hole at Calcutta'.[44] Other accounts were even more explicit in highlighting the narrative. A publication from 1763 by Luke Scrafton, a Company writer, instructed readers to revisit the original account on the grounds the author could:

> Not pretend to paint all the horrors of that dreadful night, which has been already so pathetically described by one of the sufferers, but only observe, that most of the young gentlemen in the company's services, and many of the principal inhabitants, expire in the most dreadful torments.[45]

Other works, including one printed by the prominent news writer John Almon, simply re-printed the Holwell account in full rather than direct readers to the earlier publication, introducing the piece as one that provided 'the minute detail of this shocking barbarity, which most necessarily excite pity in the breasts of the most obdurate'.[46] Repeated references and opportunities to read the original text ensured the exploits of Holwell retained a degree of public exposure throughout the Seven Years' War period.

Newspaper advertisements also show how revised editions of the Holwell account did feature at the time as part of a larger compilation, also authored by Holwell. These 'India Tracts' went through at least two editions before the hostilities in India ended, each extensively advertised in 1764 and 1765.[47] Discussed by the *Monthly Review* in July 1764, the editors provide a further sense of public familiarity with the original source material, explaining how as several pieces contained in 'India Tracts' had already featured in previous editions of the magazine, it was unnecessary to re-print them again in full.[48] They also noted, however, that readers would not be displeased to hear what Holwell himself had said of the new collection:

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[43] *Monthly Review*, Feb .1761, p. 156.
[44] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Oct. 1761, p. 475.
[45] Luke Scrafton*, Reflections on the Government of Indostan* (London, 1763), p. 58.
[46] John Almon, *An Impartial History of the Late War* (London, 1763), p. 143.
[47] John Z. Holwell, *India Tracts by Holwell and Friends*, 2nd ed. (London, 1764). Advertised in *Public Advertiser*, 21 Jun. 1764; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 9 Jul. 1764; *Public Advertiser*, 1 Apr. 1765; *St. James's Chronicle*, 4 Apr. 1765.
[48] *Monthly Review,* Jul. 1764*,* p. 77.

> My narrative of the fatal catastrophe at Calcutta, and that unexampled scene of horror to which so many subjects of Great Britain were exposed, in the prison of the Black Hole, has so close a connection with one of the pieces that precede it, as scarce to require an apology for re-printing it in this edition; prefixing, as a frontispiece to the volume, a print of the monument which I erected, at my own expense, to the memory of those unhappy sufferers.[49]

Public interest with the account even appears to have extended to Holwell himself, as an individual. An article in *Lloyd's Evening Post*, for instance, mentioned his return from a second tour in India, while another printed by the *Whitehall Evening Post* reported that he had purchased an elegant property in a fashionable part of Surrey.[50] Press attention afforded to the narrative evidently translated into a broader curiosity with the day-to-day actions of the author as a person of interest in his own right. A poem published in 1761 recounted the 'horrors of that night' by treating Holwell as the principal character in a drama, again, drawing on themes raised in his original narrative:

> Death what is death to what we suffered?
> When, giving way to absolute despair,
> Grown frantic now with we burn, we fry;
> And water, water, was the general cry!
> Water in plenty, by the guard, is brought;
> But few received so many for it fought,
> Our thirst the more increased, the more we caught.[51]

Rather than only receiving public attention for the early part of 1758 as Colley suggests, it is clear that both Holwell and his narrative retained a presence in public discourse throughout 1754-64. If previous studies have failed to appreciate the full extent of press engagement with this one account, it raises the possibility they have also overlooked other material relating to the Black Hole affair.

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[49] *Monthly Review,* Jul. 1764*,* p. 78.
[50] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 2 Nov. 1761; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 12 Dec. 1761.
[51] James Ogden, *The British Lion Rous'd* (Manchester, 1762), p. 95.

Beyond Holwell

The first thing to note is that Holwell's 'Genuine Narrative' was not the first coverage afforded to the fall of Calcutta or the violence alleged to have taken place. Holwell himself even alluded to the shock generated by the initial news reports:

> The confusion which the late capture of the East India company's settlements in Bengal must necessarily excite (...) will, I fear be not a little heightened by the miserable deaths of the greatest part of those gentlemen, who were reduced to the sad necessity of surrendering themselves prisoners.[52]

The memoirs of Horace Walpole provide further evidence of the initial consternation, who recorded hearing the news that Admiral Watson had:

> Retrieved the damages inflicted on our settlements by a new nabob, of which we had received notice in the preceding June (...) the cruelties exercised on the factory in the latter place, where 170 persons were crammed into a dungeon and stifled in the most shocking torments of heat, will not bear to be described to a good natured reader.[53]

Material from the Hill Collection corroborates this assertion, demonstrating how news that Calcutta had fallen generated a wave of public interest, with eyewitness accounts reproduced by numerous newspapers between May 1757 and April 1758. Hill himself noted that minutes from the Board of Directors suggest the Company did its best to 'minimise the panic which struck London on the arrival of the news'.[54] Indeed, a later account printed by the *Reads Weekly Journal* remarked how the re-capture of Calcutta by British forces was:

> In several respects lucky for our East India Company, as well as for some of the chief men employed by them in that part of the world, particularly in allaying the clamour against their conduct,

[52] Holwell, *A Genuine Narrative*, p. 1.
[53] John Brooke (eds.), *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Memoirs of King George II; Vol. II 1754-1757* (London, 1985), p. 279.
[54] Hill, *Bengal in 1756-1757*, Vol. 1, p. xcix.

> which was raised by the miserable death of so many of our countrymen in the Black Hole, and the effect which this misfortune had upon the price of their stock as well as their bonds.[55]

Public engagement with the episode started before publication of the Holwell narrative, yet this does not mean the violent circumstances associated with the fall of Calcutta were necessarily the sole reason for that exposure.

As discussed previously, the wider popular interest with foreign military affairs was to some extent interchangeable with news coverage afforded to an individual act of violence committed overseas. The *British Spy*, for instance, reported in June 1757 how Company bases in Bombay and Madras had each detached 'a large number of men, in conjunction with his Majesty's squadron under Admiral Watson, to re-establish the settlement of Fort William, in which they have great hopes of succeeding'.[56] Reports of similar nature appeared in the *London Gazette*, which provided a detailed account of British operations in Bengal to re-take other settlements sacked by the Nawab.[57] Both pieces were evidently interested in the wider military situation, rather than allegations of violence associated with the Black Hole affair specifically. Indeed, most press exposure afforded to this particular incident, if not any that took place during the hostilities of 1754-64, formed part of a broader analysis of the actions taken by British forces and their strategic implications. Yet although public appetite for news of military affairs provided the broader context and impetus for discussing an individual report of violence, the sensational nature of such acts often ensured they remained integral to the overall shape of that news piece. Indeed, evidence of a more substantial level of public engagement with the Black Hole affair, specifically the violence associated with it, shows how India became a more established subject of interest during the Seven Years' War, as opposed to something that only gained significant traction after 1765.

Originally published in 1754 after the previous round of hostilities between France and Britain in India had concluded, a revised edition of *A New History of the East Indies* appeared in 1758 but this time included additional chapters relating to the recent conflict

[55] *Read's Weekly Journal,* 20 Sept. 1760.
[56] *British Spy*, 11 Jun. 1757.
[57] *London Gazette*, 19 Jul. 1757.

with Siraj-ud-Daulah.[58] Although drawing most of its details from the eyewitness accounts that had appeared in newspapers throughout 1757, their inclusion in this new edition gives an indication of the extent to which commentaries continued to reflect public interest with those circumstances. In December 1759, the *Universal Chronicle* included the fall of Calcutta and the Black Hole affair in a timeline of major occurrences that had occurred during the war up to that point.[59] Admittedly, the disturbance is only briefly mentioned, a short description stating 'Calcutta taken by the Nabob and the garrison thrust into the Black Hole', however, that it is included alongside other events considered to have been significant developments is an indication of it continued relevance. Other magazines included similar timelines that also featured the episode.[60] Significantly, analysis of this sort continued to appear right through to the end of the conflict. Another work by the writer Oliver Goldsmith from 1763, drew attention to the 'excruciating torments' Holwell and his compatriots had suffered, but as part of a larger analysis of the global conflict that had taken place.[61] Indeed, when discussing the earlier mentioned publication by Luke Scrafton, the *Critical Review* highlighted 'the melancholy period, when the tragedy of the Black hole at Calcutta happened', but also acknowledged the extent of popular engagement with those circumstances stating that 'avarice and caprice gave rise to that horrid scene, with which the public is but too well apprized'.[62] Such examples are important not as much for their content, rather because they point towards a more vibrant and deeper public awareness of the Black Hole encounter and military theatre in which it had taken place.

Evidence that exposure afforded to the Black Hole affair also provides indication of a more prominent discourse concerning the East Indies conflict more generally is demonstrated with coverage afforded to other eyewitness accounts, in addition to the one provided by Holwell. Originally based at Cossimbuzar when it fell to Siraj-ud-Daulah in 1756, the Company official William Watts would publish his memoirs of those events in 1760. As with previous examples, excerpts from the account also appeared in other sources such as the *Universal Magazine*.[63] Printed against a backdrop of British military success in other parts of the world, the memoirs are interesting for the way they appealed to existing

[58] Captain Cope, *A New History of the East Indies* (London, 1758), pp. 415-426.
[59] *Universal Chronicle,* 29 Dec. 1759, p. 7.
[60] *Newcastle Magazine*, Jan. 1760, p. 38; *Court Magazine*, Apr. 1763, p. 165.
[61] Oliver Goldsmith, *The Martial Review* (London, 1763), p. 98.
[62] *Critical Review*, Apr. 1763, p. 305.
[63] William Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal* (London, 1760); *Universal Magazine*, Dec. 1760, pp. 350-355. Printed under the pseudonym John Campbell.

public interest generated by the wider global conflict, incorporating recent events from the East Indies into a broader narrative of British overseas expansion:

> The success that has every where attended the efforts of the British arms, during the course of this just and necessary war, will this period of our history resplendent, even to the latest ages (...) the people of Britain are as well entitled to know, and will with equal pleasure read, what has been effected for their service at Bengal, and accept as kindly the laurels brought them from Asia, as those that come from Africa or America. [64]

Exposure afforded to the Black Hole affair helped to channel and stimulate a broader interest with British affairs in India. The Watts account featured in the *Critical Review*, for instance, with the positive editorial providing a further sense of the emerging demand for news from the East Indies:

> We would not anticipate the curiosity of the public by extracts, which must appear lame and unsatisfactory, we will refer our readers to the pamphlet, whence he may form a judgment of the immense treasures brought into the Kingdom.[65]

The *Monthly Review* gave a similar appraisal, stating 'the interesting subjects of this little history (...) in our opinion, can hardly fail of answering the expectations which will be naturally excited in the minds of everyone'.[66] Remarks made in a separate review relating to a publication by Richard Cambridge Owen is further evidence the India conflict had become a genuine issue of public curiosity, 'his curiosity is to be applauded; his industry deserves commendation, (for it is a truly national subject of interest at present).[67] Press coverage afforded to the Black Hole affair, in effect, helped to highlight the integral role that developments in the East Indies had played in the global conflict Britain was still heavily embroiled in at that time.

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[64] Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal,* p. vi.
[65] *Critical Review*, Dec. 1760, p. 454.
[66] *Monthly Review*, Feb. 1761, p. 156.
[67] Richard Owen Cambridge, *An Account of the War in India* (London, 1761); *Critical Review*, May 1761, p. 348; *Monthly Review*, Apr. 1761, p. 256.

There is also evidence to suggest that news coverage afforded to the Black Hole affair resulted in far more nuanced expressions of public opinion. One notable example is how the event quickly came to usurp a more traditional meaning associated with the phrase 'Black Hole'. The cell or dungeon central to the Black Hole narrative was not unique or exclusive to that one particular incident but something far more generic in nature. A 'Black Hole' was a phrase more commonly used to describe a cell typically found on a military base, for the purpose of disciplining soldiers or holding disruptive prisoners. A pamphlet from 1732, for instance, which charted the military career of one John Railton, makes repeated references to the use of a Black Hole.[68] Though its function was certainly coercive, a Black Hole is not presented here as overtly barbaric or inhumane, rather a legitimate instrument for military regulation. As Railton himself explained:

> To oblige an officer I mounted an extraordinary guard, upon his promise that I should be excused a guard whenever I pleased, but upon my requesting the same, a superior officer being acquainted with it threatened to break my head and send me to the Black Hole.[69]

Indeed, the *Literary Magazine* described the Black Hole that featured during the capture of Calcutta as 'a place made by the English to secure the natives, when they committed any crime'.[70] An earlier edition of *Read's Weekly Journal* further illustrates the prevalence and acceptance of this type of cell, noting the construction of a new Black Hole in the Tower of London.[71] This particular article is interesting, as it demonstrates how such a device was not exclusive to Calcutta but also found in potentially the most iconic of British gaols, emphasising how widespread their use must have been. The account also shows how the chief purpose for the new cell was not to inflict violence, but to ensure the wellbeing of prisoners. The existing conditions were judged as 'too unwholesome for men to be confined in.' Again, this highlights the rapid shift in terminology that occurred in the years immediately after 1756, as following the sack of Fort William the term 'Black Hole' increasingly takes on a more sinister literary association, used primarily in reference to the Black Hole of Calcutta.

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[68] John Railton, *The Army Regulator* (London, 1738), pp. 1-122.
[69] Ibid., p. 20.
[70] *Literary Magazine*, May 1757, p. 223.
[71] *Read's Weekly Journal*, 7 Sept. 1754.

In addition to the changing definitions, of perhaps greater significance is the broader impact which the Black Hole affair had on coverage afforded to events of a similar nature. An article printed by the *St. James Chronicle* in 1761, for instance, reported how during their occupation of Mecklenburg, Prussian troops had confined over two thousand civilians within the city's Cathedral.[72] Interestingly, the author made a direct comparison between this event and the affair in Calcutta; 'their sufferings could only be compared to those of the English gentleman who were shut up in the Black Hole of Calcutta in 1756.' A similar example appeared in the *Royal Magazine*, which compared the situation faced by a captured soldier in North America, to the stifling conditions faced by those incarcerated in Calcutta. The author described his ordeal with the Cherokee, who stripped, greased, and covered with him streaks of bacon in preparation for roasting over an open fire. Although managing to escape, he then faced the threat of starvation but explained how:

> From this imminent distress was I, almost miraculously, preserved by the cruelty itself of the Indians; nor am I ashamed to confess, that I sustained famished nature by the bacon that was saturated with the juices of my own body. I have read of an Englishman gentleman, who, in the Black hole of Calcutta (I think) appeased his otherwise unalleviated thirst, by imbibing his own sweat (or rather, indeed, by continuing the wonted secretion of the glands, by the action of sucking, as persons do who roll a stone about their mouths) and who at that time considered another gentleman's milking his shirt clandestinely, as a very unfair proceeding: and I am satisfied that I should have looked on an attempt to have deprived me of my Indian larding, so much in the light of a robbery, as to have punished, even with unlicensed death, any invade of my dearly acquired.[73]

The narrative is further proof of the rapid transmission and impact of news from Bengal throughout the British world – the Black Hole of Calcutta having seemingly become a familiar story in North America by that point. Yet of greater relevance is how the Black Hole affair helped to define the portrayal of a specific type of violence, parallels made between

[72] *St. James's Chronicle*, 25 Apr. 1761.
[73] *Royal Magazine*, Jul. 1761, p. 28.

entirely unrelated incidents reinforcing the significance afforded to the sacking of Calcutta as an item of public discussion.

Conversely, comparisons of the Black Hole affair with less violent, even mundane events, is further illustration of the impact on public discourse. In April 1762 the *London Evening Post* reported how jurors serving in a county court were concerned about the 'unwholesomeness' of the conditions they had to work in:

> That the same time they are attending on the service of their country, their own lives may not be endangered by being crammed into a place in its consequences resembling nearest the Black Hole of Calcutta, with this difference only, the one is at Bengal and the other at Rochester.[74]

Tenuous comparisons of this sort appeared in an earlier edition of the paper, with an article that reported how large crowds had gathered at the Drury Lane Playhouse due to a visit from the Royal Family. The account described how the theatre could not accommodate the large numbers, explaining how 'the house was quite full before the doors were open so that out of the vast multitude that waited the opening of the doors, not a hundred a got in'.[75] The 'prodigious deal of mischief' said to have followed, caused some individuals to compare the situation 'to nothing so similar, as being for a time like those unhappy people, who were suffocated in the Black Hole of Calcutta (…) hundreds expecting every moment to fall down and be suffocated.' Although the account reported how the circumstances had been unsettling for many of those present, it is clear that a situation said to have caused only the tearing of 'cloaks, caps, aprons, handkerchiefs', was a far cry from the conditions experienced by the British captives in Calcutta. It is precisely that sense of exaggeration, however, which makes these articles significant. Comparisons with day-to-day occurrences such as a jostling crowd had the effect of transforming the Black Hole affair into a figure of speech that gave descriptions of commonplace events a greater air of notoriety.

In the same way that reports of Amerindian violence were often comical in tone, as previous chapters have discussed, the use of the Black Hole for allegorical emphasis could also result in commentary of a more light-hearted nature. In January 1762, the *St. James's*

[74] *London Evening Post*, 29 Apr. 1762.
[75] Ibid., 12 Sept. 1761.

Chronicle provided an account of a social gathering organised by a prominent member of London society. Referred to as a 'rout', the purpose of such an event was to encourage as many people to attend as possible, thus demonstrating the popularity of the host. A lack of space was the desired outcome, and in an attempt to emphasise that very point the article explained how:

> The Lady, who is Mistress of the 'Rout', is happy in proportion to the numbers she has been able to assemble. If the public way is interrupted for three streets together, and the company can scarce get to and fro between the house and their coaches, if the boxes at the play or opera are robbed of their company (…) if in the most spacious apartments in London the company are crowded together as close as the poor prisoners in the Black Hole of Calcutta, the triumph is more ample and complete.[76]

This account clearly illustrates that not all of the comparisons made with the Black Hole episode did so to highlight its serious nature or the violence associated with it; public discourse could engage with the event in an ironic manner. A later appeal by London chimney sweepers, for instance, appeared in the *Public Advertiser* and asked residents to keep their fires lit all year round so as to keep them in employment, arguing that comparing the 'immoderate heat of weather' to the Black Hole of Calcutta was no excuse for not participating.[77] In one sense, such examples might confirm those studies that play down the significance and relevance of the Black Hole affair at the time, however, its liberal use for comparative emphasis or irony indicates that it must have achieved far more of an underlying public presence than previously suggested.

A closer examination of commentary relating to the Black Hole incident, beyond that associated with the Holwell narrative and in addition to sources identified by existing collections of material, show the affair to have achieved significant public exposure throughout the Seven Years' War. Furthermore, coverage afforded to the episode also demonstrates how it formed part of a broader engagement with British affairs in the East Indies. Some of the most interesting features of that material, however, emerge when the focus shifts from exploring the extent and impact of that expanded coverage, to the

[76] *St. James's Chronicle*, 9 Jan. 1762.
[77] *Public Advertiser,* 21 May 1768.

opinions offered in response to the alleged violence. As the *Annual Register* remarked towards the end of the conflict:

> In reality, the splendid and lucrative advantages, in which (whether wisely or not) we have engaged ourselves; the uncertainty of the final issue of those attempts; the debates, almost equal in zeal and fervour to those of national parties, which arisen upon them; naturally render the affairs of our Company there a most interesting object, and a matter of general and eager curiosity.[78]

The next Chapter will consider these issues in more detail, continuing first with some of the more prominent themes expressed in relation to the Black Hole affair, before showing how the events of June 1756 were not alone in attracting the attention of the news press. Indeed, coverage relating to the wider East Indies conflict demonstrates how commentators focussed on a number of violent episodes, in addition to the sacking of Calcutta, to advocate their own viewpoints. In particular, public discourse provided an opportunity for individuals to explain the violence and, crucially, the response it warranted. As will be shown, these arguments would build on a concept of oriental despotism that had emerged in the preceding decades, as the basis for much of that debate. Yet just as coverage afforded to the North American hostilities reveals themes and discussions more typically associated with a later period of engagement, news commentary relating to India produced throughout 1754-64 reveals a similarly complex and fluid analysis of British actions there, something usually attributed to the decades after the Seven Years' War.

[78] *Annual Register of 1764*, p. 34.

CHAPTER SIX

VIOLENCE AND BRITISH INTERVENTION IN BENGAL

The overthrow and replacement of Siraj-ud-Daulah with a British backed rival, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, was the first in a series of political changes that rocked Bengal throughout the Seven Years' War. Although many within the East India Company believed the new Nawab would be pliant and useful for promoting British interests, he quickly faced accusations of having backtracked on financial guarantees made after Battle at Plassey, as well as engaging in secret negotiations with rival European powers. In light of those tensions the new Governor of Fort William, Henry Vansittart, forced Mir Jafar to abdicate in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Cossim Ali Khan. In the same manner, Mir Cossim would also fall afoul of his Company sponsors and be removed after a short military campaign following renewed charges of violence, including an alleged massacre of British soldiers at Patna in 1763. These three 'revolutions', as referred to by commentators in Britain, culminated with the defeat of a combined Mughal force at Buxar in October 1764 and the subsequent granting of the Diwani to the Company a year later. Precisely how and why these circumstances unfolded is not the chief concern here. Instead, building on the conclusions of the previous section, this chapter explores how press coverage of violence associated with the political turmoil in Bengal 1756-64 allowed for a broader public discussion relating to the appropriateness of British expansion in the region, an issue predominately explored from a post-1764 perspective.[1]

As touched upon already, public debate concerning early British intervention in India has already been the subject of a number of studies. Many of these consider publications written and promoted by Company officials, among others, in the decades after the Seven Years' War. Much of this material was produced in response to parliamentary enquiries set up to investigate allegations of corruption within the Bengal Presidency, with supporters of prominent figures such as John Zephaniah Holwell, Robert Clive, and Henry Vansittart, each attempting to justify the actions of those individuals.[2] That process saw the Company and its backers foster a narrative that portrayed India as a

[1] See Robert Travers *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: the British in Bengal* (Cambridge, 2007); Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013).
[2] Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 111-114; Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (California, 2012), pp. 1-33; Jon Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos Empire* (London, 2016), pp. 132-157.

failed or ungoverned state. As Rebecca Brown argues, a memorial to the Patna Massacre of 1763, erected after the Seven Years' War, did not serve to pay homage to the victims but 'to call attention to the horror that was the event itself', circumstances apparently made possible by the anarchic conditions present in India at that time.[3] This notion of a 'lawless zone' is something Eliga Gould also considers, albeit mainly in reference to the limits of English legal authority along the North American frontier and chiefly in relation to the later Revolutionary period. These studies demonstrate, however, that restoring stability to places characterised by so-called 'multiple legalities and perpetual violence' became a powerful theme in news commentary that advocated a more active approach to imperial governance.[4] In response, public scrutiny of British involvement in India and the interventionist narrative underpinning those policies would grow in strength thanks to increasing humanitarian concerns expressed by metropolitan audiences in Britain and ruling elites within India itself.[5] Yet although discussions relating to the wisdom or morality of overseas expansion were a feature of public discourse during the latter part of the eighteenth century, it is clear from commentary produced during the Seven Years' War that precursory elements of those same themes and debates had already started to emerge in the preceding decade.

As demonstrated by the complexity of coverage produced during the French and Indian conflict, the specific themes that commentators drew upon when critiquing a violent episode were often adapted to suit changing circumstances on the ground. This is particularly true of material that engaged with the ongoing political turmoil in Bengal from 1756-64. Exposure afforded to acts of violence played a crucial role in articulating discussions about the perceived military, institutional, and psychological flaws of each Nawab removed from power by the Company. As this chapter demonstrates, however, not only were there strong similarities in terms of how each of these 'revolutions' was rationalised, but also a gradual shift in the tone of that engagement, with a growing sense of scepticism expressed in parallel. Beginning with an analysis of coverage afforded to the overthrow of Siraj-ud-Daulah, the chapter considers continuities expressed in commentary

[3] Rebecca M. Brown, 'Inscribing Colonial Monumentality: A Case Study of the 1763 Patna Massacre Memorial', *Journal of Asian Studies,* 65 (2006), pp. 99-101.
[4] Eliga Gould, '"Zones of Law, Zones of Violence": The Legal Geography of the British Atlantic, circa 1772', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (2003), p. 509.
[5] See Greene, *Evaluating Empire*, pp. 120-121. Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (London, 2006), pp. 1-5; Robert Travers, 'Contested Despotism: Problems of Liberty in British India', in Jack P. Greene (ed.), *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 191-219; Jon Wilson, 'Anxieties of Distance: Codification in Early Colonial Bengal', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), pp. 7-23.

that dealt with the subsequent toppling of Mir Jafar in 1760 and Mir Cossim in 1763. In particular, reports of violence associated with those episodes demonstrate how ideas of oriental despotism and moral weakness helped to shape the broader response to those incidents and the interventions that followed. Yet just as military expediency often defined press attention afforded to violence committed in North America, from 1754-64 the pragmatism of an earlier mercantile outlook continued to influence critical discourse relating to British affairs in India. Emerging humanitarian concerns were certainly evident, but tempered by a more traditional commercial emphasis.

Siraj-ud-Daulah and the First Revolution

Whereas the previous chapter considered the wider extent of public engagement with the Black Hole episode, the following section will now explore coverage relating to specific details of that incident. The violent nature of the affair became a proxy for attacking the integrity and perceived weakness of Siraj-ud-Daulah, issues subsequently used to justify his removal from power. Of particular relevance is how the news press approached the incident in much the same way as exposure afforded to frontier violence in North America. Those individuals who suffered at the hands of Mughal forces would receive specific focus.

An early report that appeared in the *London Chronicle* contained extracts from many of the initial eyewitness accounts. One piece, 'containing a particular account of the unfortunate affair at Bengal', provided details of the determined, albeit unsuccessful attempt by the British garrison to defend Fort William. It went on to explain how following their surrender, '170 of us were crammed into a hole not large enough for 50 of us to breathe in; the effect of it was that only 16 were alive the next morning.' Likening the situation to 'Hell in Miniature', the inclusion of a casualty list further compounds the unsettling content.[6] Details of fatalities were common features of press reports relating to military engagements, yet this particular register is noteworthy for the emphasis placed on those who had suffered because of their incarceration in the Black Hole, rather than affected by the siege itself. The *Scots Magazine* printed an account of 'our disasters in Bengal', along with an expanded version of the casualty list that included additional details

[6] *London Chronicle*, 7 Jun. 1757; Gupta, 'The Black Hole', pp. 53-56. Initial correspondence relating to the Black Hole affair were composed at Fulta, where those who had escaped the attack on Calcutta fled to. Gupta argues that all subsequent accounts are based on those initial sources, which in turn can all be traced back to three individuals in particular.

of those who died by 'overheat and for want of water'.[7] Similar details appeared in the *London Evening Post*, which explained how:

> Out of the 175 that went in, only 16 came out alive the next morning, among whom were Mr Holwell, and Mr Burdett, a writer, this is the only writer mentioned that escaped smothering. Mr Lushington, another writer, got on board the ships after the fort was taken, and likewise Mr Charlton; these are the only writers, out of eight, that were saved; the other five were smothered in the hole with the rest, by the excessive heat.[8]

In addition to repeated descriptions that highlighted the stifling conditions, the emphasis placed on the large numbers who had 'perished miserably' as a result gave the incident a human dimension.[9] The *London Chronicle*, for instance, printed details of the civilian casualties, with particular attention afforded to the women and children affected by the violence:

> Mr Child, Schoolmaster; Atkinson and Ridge, Attorneys; Pysinch, a Writer; Blany, a Glass Grinder; Burton, a Butcher (...) Lady Russell. Mrs Drake and two children. Mrs Curttenden (dead), three children. Mrs Mackett, two children. Mrs Mapletost, two children. Mrs Gray, one child. Mrs McGuire, three children. Mrs Cooke, one child.[10]

The account presents the British settlement not simply as a military base, but a home to numerous civilians and young families. Indeed, another article in the same publication reinforced this sense of domesticity, by describing day-to-day life in Calcutta:

> Most Gentleman and Ladies in Bengal live both splendidly and pleasantly, the forenoons being dedicated to business and after dinner to rest and in the evening to recreate themselves in chairs in the fields, or to gardens by water (...) sometimes there is the

[7] *Scots Magazine*, May 1757, p. 252.
[8] *London Evening Post*, 7 Jun. 1757.
[9] *Public Advertiser*, 7 Jun. 1757.
[10] *London Chronicle*, 9 Jun. 1757.

> diversion of fishing or fowling, or both, and before night they make friendly visits to one another.[11]

Complimentary remarks of this sort had already appeared in the *Universal Magazine* a few months prior to the outbreak of hostilities, an illustrated account of Fort William described the settlement as containing:

> Many convenient lodgings, both for the factors and writers, and some storehouses for the Company's goods (…) The Company also has a pretty good hospital here, with a garden and fish ponds, from whence the governor's kitchen is supplied with carp, mullets and scallops.[12]

The sense of personal loss is again demonstrated by a later article, which outlined how relatives of the 'unhappy persons who perished in the Black Hole' were to share in the receipt of a large annuity as financial restitution for those family members they had lost.[13] Portraying the victims as ordinary Britons, who before June 1756 had lived similar lives to their contemporaries in Europe, framed the sacking of Calcutta as less a military engagement and more a human tragedy.

Direct parallels between the images of civilian misfortune that had transpired in Bengal and coverage afforded to Amerindian raids throughout the same period are clear. Published in 1761, *The British Lion Rous'd* considered outrages committed against British settlers in North America, but focussed in the same way on those who perished in the Black Hole, again, drawing on the language of sensibility:

> What few survived the horrors of this place;
> Where, upward of a hundred souls expire,
> Raging with thirst and suffocation dire.
> At such a tale of complicate distress,
> Shall not the tear humanity confess?
> They wept not vengeance lingers to requite,

[11] *London Chronicle*, 9 Jun. 1757.
[12] *Universal Magazine*, Mar. 1756, p. 122.
[13] *London Chronicle*, 30 Apr. 1763.

The tragedy of that unhappy night.[14]

In this context, violence committed against Britons in either region is equivalent to the other. Of greater importance is the message audiences were encouraged to read into those shared circumstances - that such acts represented an illegitimate targeting of persons who were unable to defend themselves. As outlined in previous chapters, framing violence in these terms encouraged public scrutiny of those held to be responsible. In the case of Calcutta in 1756, press coverage of the alleged transgressions would form the basis of public discourse that justified the overthrow Siraj-ud-Daulah. Yet even here, the process by which news commentators approached this subject was not always straightforward.

A demand for punishment and revenge were key features of exposure afforded to the military campaign against Siraj-ud-Daulah, allegations of violent misdemeanours helping to promote an argument whereby the Nawab had effectively left Britain no choice but to respond with force. As the author of an account printed in 1761 made clear, 'Mr Clive landed with his troops, and began his march towards Calcutta. Animated with revenge at the affecting sight of a place, the scene of the deplorable sufferings of so many of their brave countrymen'.[15] The Black Hole affair demanded retribution. A piece in the *Scots Magazine* offered a similar view, explaining how 'this fatal disaster spread a general alarm in the other settlements, particularly those at Madras and Bombay. They did not however, abandon themselves to spiritless dejection, but resolved to exert vigorous efforts for the recovery of Calcutta'.[16] Further indication of this bellicose response appeared in *Read's Weekly Journal*, which printed a song, apparently written and sung by British sailors during the campaign to re-take Fort William. Again, the piece alluded to the fact that a principal reason for the military operation was to avenge the violent crimes that had apparently been committed, 'to save our country's trade and name, and to revenge it's wrong; From Fort St George we hither came, with hearts all bold and strong.'[17] With further descriptions such as 'from Calcutta we drove the Moors, and made them fly like sons of whores', the penultimate verse reveals how this distain was wholly punitive in nature, 'to Hughley next we best our course, the Nabob to chastise. And dauntless braved his utmost force, in bright honour was the prize'. This trend continues with the frontispiece to *India Tracts*, printed in

[14] James Ogden, *The British Lion Rous'd* (Manchester, 1762), p. 97, p.107.
[15] Anon, *A Complete History of the War in India* (London, 1761), p. 25.
[16] *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1758, p. 180.
[17] *Read's Weekly Journal,* 22 Oct. 1757.

1762, which showed how following the re-capture of Calcutta, Holwell had paid for the construction of a commemorative obelisk, which included the inscription:

> Inhabitants, Military and Militia to the number of 123 persons, were by the tyrannic violence of Surajud Dowla, Suba of Bengal, suffocated in the Black Hole prison of Fort William in the night of the 20th day of June 1756, and promiscuously thrown the succeeding morning into the ditch of the ravelin of this Place (...) This horrid act of violence was as amply as deservedly revenged on Surajud Dowla, by his Majesty's Arms, under the Conduct of Vice-Admiral Watson and Col. Clive Anno 1757.[18]

As discussed previously, it is clear Holwell was an unabashed self-promoter and it is important to interpret such descriptions within that context. Nevertheless, the frontispiece conveyed the same themes as other commentary pieces that dealt with hostile acts committed against British settlers - Britain would punish those who instigated or committed violence that flouted conventions of Natural Law.

Admittedly, accounts printed or supported by individuals such as Holwell, who had been imprisoned, tortured, and then subsequently plotted the overthrow of Sirah-ud-Daulah, were always likely to portray the Nawab in negative terms. Yet despite potential bias, such publications remain significant for the range of themes they utilised when describing his supposed violent behaviour. The piece by William Watts, for instance, explained 'how one of our finest settlements in the East Indies was suddenly sacked and subverted by the impetuosity of a young man intoxicated with sovereign power', before giving a damning indictment of Siraj-ud-Daulah and the outrages he had supposedly committed against his family, neighbours, subjects, the Company, and Watts personally.[19] On seizing Fort William, the Nawab allegedly:

> Acted with a degree of insolent cruelty, of which the world is too well apprized already (...) let it suffice then to say, that the Suba wreaked his malice, for vengeance it could not be styled, upon a

[18] John Z. Holwell, *India Tracts by Holwell and Friends*, 2nd ed. (London, 1764), p. 2.
[19] William Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal* (London, 1760), p. vii.

> multitude of innocent people, who had given him the smallest offence.[20]

Once again, the piece presented acts of violence as having fallen on the very individuals expected to be exempt from such hostility. Describing the intimidation that he, an ordinary merchant not a soldier, had experienced, Watts alleged that Siraj-ud-Daulah threatened 'upon the first intelligence he had of any motion of the English troops, he would cut off that gentleman's head, or cause him to be impaled'. The author considered such behaviour to be 'an outrage on the Law of Nations as was inconsistent with the rank of a prince, and must, by the rules of common sense, leave any man in his circumstances at liberty to take methods that appeared to him safest for his own protection'. Another Company agent made similar observations, stating how the fall of Calcutta 'might naturally be expected from a garrison consisting almost entirely of citizens, with a few soldiers commanded by officers who had never seen an action, and a fort, that looked more like merchant warehouses than a place of defence.'[21] This was not a military engagement but an attack on civilians and other non-combatants, something that demanded a firm response. Yet as with negative exposure afforded to Amerindian frontier raids, criticism of the Nawab did not simply focus on the perceived illegality of his actions, or a need to seek retribution. News commentary also helped to articulate opinions that went beyond simple expressions of outrage.

Public discourse that presented the Company as actively seeking to prevent future atrocities reinforced those who presented the removal of Siraj-ud-Daulah in terms of a punishment for violence already committed. In June 1763, for instance, the *London Chronicle* printed a detailed account of a new memorial unveiled in Westminster Abbey. Dedicated to Vice-Admiral Watson, who led the campaign to retake Calcutta but had died of fever shortly after, the account describes the placing of the epitaph in a prominent position over the north door of the abbey, and the scene it depicted:

> The Admiral is represented in full proportion standing upon a pedestal, with a branch of olive in his right hand looking towards a beautiful figure of a woman in a kneeling posture, returning thanks to the Admiral for her safe deliverance from imprisonment

[20]Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution*, pp. 14-15.
[21] Luke Scrafton*, Reflections on the Government of Indostan* (London, 1763), p. 58.

> in the Black Hole, and underneath the following words, *Calcutta freed, January 11th 1757*. On the other side of the Admiral is the figure of an Indian prisoner, sitting chained to a pillar, looking with a dejected countenance, but casts a contemptuous look towards the Admiral.[22]

As with the Holwell obelisk, the Watson memorial should be considered within the context of a commercial agenda. The Company was said to have paid for its construction 'as a grateful testimony of the signal advantages which they obtained by his valour and prudent conduct'. If approached purely in terms of coverage afforded to the unveiling, however, those descriptions of the epitaph are significant for how they appear to justify the removal of Siraj-ud-Daulah. The Black Hole affair represents an illegal act inflicted upon innocent civilians, one avenged by Admiral Watson the apparent embodiment of British righteousness. Yet of greater significance is the reference to an effigy of a chained prisoner, who is shown observing Watson with a disapproving glare. The message is clear; the Company had deposed the Nawab in response to his violent behaviour, yet they had also taken such action to avoid future transgressions of this sort. The vengeful disposition of the soldier represents a potential for further animosity. Indeed, the account by Watts expressed similar feelings:

> Many of the European sufferers were absolutely ruined and undone; reduced from opulence and ease, to misery and want, by a sudden unforeseen and inevitable misfortune (...) it was not only a piece of justice to recover for them what they had lost, but point of true policy to prevent the terror of their fate from having a mischievous operation in succeeding times.[23]

The violence that had plagued the English settlement is presented as not only ending with Company intervention in Bengal, but seemingly unable to return because of that same policy.

Accounts that focussed on how the native population had apparently suffered under Siraj-ud-Daulah reinforced the notion that an increased British presence would

[22] *London Chronicle*, 18 Jun. 1763.
[23] Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution,* p. 130.

prevent future atrocities. In May 1761 a serialised account of the larger European war, printed by the *London Magazine*, explored the recent events that had transpired in Bengal. The piece explained how the Nawab had 'committed such cruelties as bring disgrace on human nature (...) and having thus, as he thought, not only driven the English out of his dominions, but rendered it impossible for them to return without his leave'.[24] In addition to reports of violence inflicted upon British settlers, however, the concerns of local figures also featured prominently. The same account explained how most within province held the Nawab in low regard 'for ever since his accession, he had acted in such a tyrannical manner, had committed so many capricious cruelties, and was of such a revengeful disposition, that no man thought himself safe under his government'. Such arguments drew upon an idea of oriental despotism, which as earlier chapters show had become a significant theme in public discourse throughout the preceding decades. Similar views appeared in the *Scots Magazine*, which described how 'the cruel and avaricious temper of this prince rendered him the object of universal aversion and terror'.[25] By emphasising the effects of this violence on the native inhabitants, such commentary reinforces the idea that Company intervention was a justifiable act that avenged the wrongs committed against British settlers, but would also protect the indigenous people of Bengal. Yet in parallel with the focus given to issues of security, these reports of violence also allowed for an evaluation of the character and perceived deficiencies of the Nawab as an effective ruler.

Condemnation levied against Siraj-ud-Daulah often focused on the unstable nature of his personality as much as it did the violence he had allegedly carried out. Following the tentative peace after Company forces had retaken Calcutta, Watts wrote how the inhabitants continued to be:

> Filled with alarms that were but too well founded. Experience had already taught them, how far the caprice of the Suba might go, and it was no way improbable, that if they were so unhappy as to fall again under his power, they might, if possible, meet with still worse treatment.[26]

[24] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1761, p. 125.
[25] *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1758, p. 179.
[26] Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution*, pp. 73-75.

Ill temperament is a theme raised repeatedly, the author observing how Siraj-ud-Daulah had revealed 'the severity of his nature, in so many instances, as to strike a universal terror; more especially as the fickleness of his disposition suffered no man who was near him, and in his power, to think himself safe.' An account by John Almon offered the same appraisal, 'the severity and fickle disposition of the Nabob spread terror among those about him'.[27] The violence orchestrated by the Nawab was less an illegal transaction or expression of strength, but a demonstration of insecurity and poor judgement. A later piece in the *Critical Review* expressed a similar view of what had led to the Black Hole episode, 'avarice and caprice gave rise to that horrid scene'.[28] Indeed, the explanations for this 'violent and rapacious disposition' were a mystery even to those who had experienced it at first hand, 'the trivial, inconsistent, and in various respects ill grounded pretences, he afterwards suggested, as the motives to his conduct, evidently show they were contrived rather to hide, than to declare the intentions from he really acted.'[29] Instead, commentators presented the 'uneasinesses, jealousies, and suspicions' that drove Siraj-ud-Daulah, as the likely cause of his 'arbitrary' tendency for violence, traits that 'had disgusted even his own subjects'.[30] In a sense, the allegations of violence are symptomatic of a more fundamental character flaw, one aggravated by the abuse of power that eastern despotism appeared to encourage.

Complementary themes that criticised Siraj-ud-Daulah in terms of conduct and personality appear in news sources throughout 1756-64. An account initially composed in 1750 as a travel monologue but revised shortly after the fall of Calcutta in 1756, included additional details relating to the recent conflict in Bengal. The piece said the Nawab had caused:

> So much mischief to our settlements in that country. He must therefore be a very powerful prince, and perhaps may find work enough for the Mogul himself, before he is brought under subjection, especially as he is but little acquainted with the European manner of going to war.[31]

[27] John Almon, *An Impartial History of the Late War* (London, 1763), p. 213.
[28] *Critical Review,* Apr. 1763, p. 305.
[29] Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution,* p. 12.
[30] Ibid. pp. 54-63; Oliver Goldsmith, *The Martial Review* (London, 1763), p. 98.
[31] Bartholomew Plaisted, *A Journal from Calcutta in Bengal* (London, 1758), p. 221.

Despite alluding to the violent nature of Siraj-ud-Dualah, the newer version of the account is interesting for the way it simultaneously belittled the Nawab, stating:

> Happy for the East India Company, that the Nabob himself is no better skilled in this necessary Art [of war], otherwise he would never have suffered Calcutta to be retaken, and his own town Hughly (...) to be plundered and burnt by a handful of English.[32]

This sense of weakness is evident in some of the earliest reports relating to the Black Hole episode. Initial accounts emphasised how despite vastly outnumbering the British garrison, as well as having repeatedly bombarded the fort with artillery, it was alleged the Mughal force could have 'fired till doom's day and never have made a breach'.[33] Similar observations appear in a later piece that reported how against an army of nearly 70,000 'a few gallant friends, and the remains of a feeble garrison, bravely held out the fort to the last extremity'.[34] Crucially, in showing the difficulty Siraj-ud-Daulah had faced in defeating even a small British force, the accounts reinforce a sense of exaggerated strength. Despite the violence that followed the underlying theme remains one of British resolve, juxtaposed with the fragility of Siraj-ud-Daula as a competent military commander. Even the Holwell narrative, hostile as it was towards the Nawab, implied the decision to incarcerate the British prisoners was not his but that of headstrong deputies, over whom he exerted little oversight.[35] Regardless whether the reported violence was in accordance or open disregard of what the Nawab had wished for, that behaviour was demonstration of an inherently weak character, both in personality and conduct.

The emphasis placed on this idea of personal weakness and poor judgement is important, because in equating acts of violence with a broader indictment on the perceived capability of Siraj-ud-Daulah as an effective ruler, such commentary vindicated the decision to remove him from power. Crucially, these same themes would be utilised throughout the East Indies conflict, appearing again in exposure afforded to the subsequent revolutions in 1760 and 1763. In addition to the continuities, however, press engagement with these

[32] Plaisted, *Journal from* Calcutta, p. 221.
[33] *London Evening Post*, 7 Jun. 1757; *London Chronicle*, 7 Jun. 1757; *Newcastle Magazine*, Sept. 1757, p. 416; *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1758, p. 180.
[34] John Almon, *A Review of the Reign of George II* (London, 1762), p. 152.
[35] John Z. Holwell, *A Genuine Narrative of the Deplorable Deaths of the English Gentleman and Others who were Suffocated in the Black Hole* (London, 1758, p. 8

episodes demonstrates how public discourse also developed in response to events on the ground.

Chinsurah and the Legacy of Amboyna

Following the revolution in 1757 that replaced Siraj-ud-Daulah with Mir Jafar, the relationship between Company officials and the new Nawab quickly deteriorated amid accusations he had reneged on promises concerning British trading rights. Reports that suggested Mir Jafar was also engaging in clandestine talks with Dutch and French interests placed further strain on the affiliation. With military success, globally, showing no dramatic improvement for Britain until 1759, it is perhaps unsurprising that when Mir Jafar was removed from power in 1760, during what became known as the 'Second Revolution', many commentators praised the decision. News of violent behaviour, directly or indirectly connected with Mir Jafar, helped to promote a case justifying this second instance of Company intervention. As with the overthrow of Siraj-ud-Daulah, public criticism of Mir Jafar went beyond simply highlighting the abhorrent nature of the alleged violence, commentators presented those actions as indicative of someone inherently unfit to be in power. Of particular interest, however, is that in establishing a connection between violence and ineffective governance, public engagement with this second revolution also focussed on themes concerned with betrayal and duplicity. Press coverage might show that an individual prone to impulsive displays of bloodlust effectively forfeited their right to govern, but violence resulting from a lack of personal integrity was an equally powerful theme. Once again, these arguments would benefit from established narratives that depicted eastern rulers as malicious and tyrannical, but also manipulative and opportunistic.[36] News commentary relating to the Dutch incursion at Chinsurah in 1760, supposedly undertaken with prior consent of Mir Jafar, demonstrates the effectiveness of such themes in shaping public discussion. Indeed, although the violence reported in this particular case relates to actions committed by Dutch forces, they are of relevance to this study precisely because of their subsequent use in attacking the perceived integrity of Mir Jafar.

Despite having declared neutrality at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, as a long-established power in the East Indies the Dutch Republic continued to represent a significant threat to British overseas interests. Possessing their own factories throughout

[36] See Chapter Two.

Bengal, the Dutch East India Company dispatched a naval squadron in October 1759 to reinforce their outpost at Chinsurah, a small settlement upstream from Calcutta. Aware that most British forces were heavily engaged in operations elsewhere, the Dutch saw an opportunity to disrupt the commercial monopoly Britain had established after Plassey. Yet after a short naval skirmish, followed by a brief military engagement outside Chinsurah, a British detachment completely routed the Dutch, leaving Britain as the dominant European power in Bengal.[37] Leaving aside the broader geo-political significance, the Dutch would come under particular scrutiny from British news commentators. Underpinning this discussion were additional reports highlighting earlier acts of violence, allegedly committed by Dutch agents throughout the region. The importance of these accusations, many relating to events that long preceded the Seven Years' War, is the connection established with Mir Jafar, which presented the Nawab as someone who was guilty-by-association. Renewed interest in the alleged massacre that had taken place at Amboyna a century earlier demonstrates how pronounced the use of such themes could be.

The Amboyna Massacre of 1623 took place on the island of Ambon, a Dutch spice colony in present day Indonesia. Although accounts differ, the affair reportedly involved the alleged torture and execution of a group of English traders by the Dutch East India Company. Set against the backdrop of ongoing Anglo-Dutch hostilities, the episode generated significant public outcry in England, with a number of sensationalist pamphlets produced in the decades that followed.[38] By the 1750s, however, Amboyna had largely become an event of historic significance and not one eighteenth century commentators might readily describe as a current news affair. Yet despite having taken place well over a century before the Seven Years' War, the Dutch incursion at Chinsurah provided a fresh opportunity for the re-appropriation of Amboyna as something relevant to India in the present moment. This would have significant ramifications in terms of how the news press would portray Mir Jafar.

The process that made Amboyna into a pertinent item of discussion again started before news of the Dutch operation in Bengal had reached British shores. Published in 1757 as part of a larger collection of essays, a translation of an earlier work by a French historian

[37] James P. Lawford, *Britain's Army in India: From its Origins to the Conquest of Bengal* (London, 1978), p. 294.
[38] See Antony Milton, 'Marketing a Massacre: Amboyna, the East India Company, and the Public Sphere in Early Stuart England', in Peter Lake and Steven Pincus (eds.), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 168 - 190; Alison Games, 'Violence on the Fringes: The Virginia (1622) and Amboyna (1623) Massacres', *History*, 99 (2014), pp. 505-549.

included a new addition by an English author that outlined various instances of Dutch aggression. Explaining how they had looked upon the efforts of the English 'with jealous eyes', the account described how the Dutch:

> Employed all their industry in scandalising and calumniating the English nation among the Indian princes, representing them as a cruel, perfidious and domineering people, whose business in the East was very different from that of trade, their thoughts bent upon nothing less than the enslaving of those countries who admitted them.[39]

Such conduct had led to the massacre at Amboyna, which the author then went on to describe. Excerpts from that account also appeared in the *Critical Review*:

> From plunder the victors proceeded to the last acts of inhuman barbarity, the factors of the English company were seized, stripped naked, bound with cords, or loaded with irons, and after being most unmercifully beaten, were thrown head long from the walls, and when all this cruel tragedy was over, their executioners not yet satisfied with their sufferings, dragged those miserable objects in chains through the streets.[40]

As a well-publicised event, that details of Amboyna should feature in a self-described 'History' of European expansion in the East Indies is in itself unremarkable. That accounts of the massacre started to appear repeatedly in other news publications, however, is more significant. This indicates far greater renewed interest with the affair.

Another account originally printed in 1754, but revised in 1758, provided more substantial details of the affair and violence alleged to have taken place:

> The Dutch proceeded to torture the English factors, both by water and fire, compelling them to swallow water or drown till one body was swelled as big as two, and the water gushed out at their ears and nostrils, and their eyes were ready to start out of their heads.

[39] Captain Cope, *A New History of the East-Indies* (London 1757), pp. 411-429.
[40] *Monthly Review*, Jan. 1757, p. 69.

> Then taking them down from the boards they had fastened them to, and having made them bring up the water again, if they did not say what was dictated to them, they repeated the torture.[41]

Again, mid-eighteenth century audiences who may already have been familiar with Amboyna through popular folklore will likely have recognised these descriptions, much of the content directly lifted from or based on original accounts and existing pamphlets.[42] Indeed, a particularly harsh review of a separate, but related account of the East Indies indicates how familiar many commentators already were with the history of British involvement in the region by 1760:

> What single benefit can the reader deduce from that cold, inanimate, heavy appendix, hanging, like an enormous excrescence, on the rear of the performance, especially as the proceedings of the English and French commissaries at Madras, were sufficiently known, from colonel Lawrence's narrative of the war on the coast of Coromandel. Nor is this all. Our learned author, not satisfied with publishing a load of useless original pieces, has recourse to the collections of Harris and Purchas, books to be met with in the shop of every bookseller; and by an extract from Sir Thomas Roe's journal, wrote a century and a half ago.[43]

The images and language offered in these revised narratives, whose subject related to a period in European history that contemporaries in the eighteenth century generally accepted was far more violent, were neither exceptional nor revelatory in terms of content. The significance is not that such material re-appeared but rather the timing of its appearance.

As tensions between Dutch and British forces in Bengal turned to open confrontation, references to Amboyna and other historical acts of violence became more explicit, with the distinction between past and present affairs increasingly blurred. In

[41] Cope, *New History of the East-Indies*, p. 75
[42] Games, 'Violence on the Fringes', pp. 517-520. See for instance John Dryden, *Amboyna, or the Cruelties of the Dutch to the English Merchants* (London, 1673).
[43] *Critical Review*, May 1761, p. 348.

September 1758, reports emerged that Dutch agents had intercepted an English merchant ship off the coast of India and thrown the English sailors overboard. In response, an article in the *London Evening Post* drew historic parallels, 'alas! What did they formerly do at Amboyna? What did they lately do to the Crew of one of our ships trading in a fair and legal manner in India?'[44] Another account printed by the *London Chronicle* made similar observations, remarking how Amboyna and the other 'inhuman barbarities' committed by the Dutch, were 'far from being discontinued by the subjects of that republic, that authentic proofs have been offered of their having been equalled'.[45] In the same manner, the *Monitor* explained how readers should not be surprised, as the Dutch had already committed similar outrages:

> As soon as they found their strength in the Indies sufficient to carry their plot into execution, they seized the English factories at Amboyna and under false pretences, tortured them to death in a most inhuman and barbarous manner.[46]

Further comparisons appear in an account from 1758, which explained how the Dutch had massacred Chinese settlers at Batavia in 1740, destroying 'upwards of twenty thousand of these people in cold blood, having first disarmed them'.[47] Once again, Amboyna provided a sense of historical context:

> To justify [the massacre], the Dutch pretended to have discovered a conspiracy of the Chinese, to make themselves masters of Batavia, and extirpate the Hollanders: But as this was also the pretence for murdering our innocent, defenceless factors, at Amboyna, as well as for massacring the natives of the spice islands, and for the numberless cruelties they exercised in India, this will be but little regarded.[48]

The significance is not that Amboyna had again become a focus of discussion in its own right, rather its use to reinforce accusations relating to acts of violence associated with current news affairs. The same was true of other historic episodes. A piece in the

[44] *London Evening Post*, 23 Sept. 1758.
[45] L*ondon Chronicle*, 26 Oct. 1758.
[46] *Monitor*, 30 Sept. 1758, p. 1011.
[47] Cope, *New History of the East-Indies*, p. 124.
[48] Ibid.

Gentleman's Magazine explained how 'as the late proceedings of the Dutch in the East Indies have made a strong impression on the minds of the people of this nation, the following story will show how much they are to be dreaded, whenever they have power to carry their resentment into execution'.[49] The account that followed told how a local King 'so wearied out with the tyrannies and insolence of his Dutch neighbours' had attempted to seek protection from Britain but Dutch agents murdered him in reprisal. The son of the deposed King was referred to by the author as a 'fit instrument for taking full vengeance of the Dutch, not only for their late treacherous attempt against our settlement at Calcutta, but they also for the thousand insolences they have been guilty towards us in that quarter of the world.' The repeated interchange between historic and current affairs, would give reports of the Chinsurah episode an added a sense of gravitas.

News of the Dutch incursion started to appear in the British press from June 1760 onwards. The *Edinburgh Magazine*, among others, explained how the latest advices from India suggested that Britain had 'a new enemy to deal with in this quarter'.[50] Parallels drawn with Amboyna were immediate. An article in the *Universal Magazine* exclaimed it was Dutch intention 'to act a sequel to the tragedy', and reports the Dutch Government had only gone so far as to issue their Governor at Batavia with a formal reprimand appeared only to enflame public sentiment further:

> Have they determined to punish him for this insolence and treachery, and to give satisfaction for the insult and mischief he has been guilty of? A mere disapproval is no reparation for the violence attempted. Had the scheme at Amboyna been as fortunately defeated, there is little doubt the States General would then have disavowed the attempt.[51]

Another publication expressed a similar view, arguing that even if the Dutch Governor had acted without the knowledge of officials in Europe, 'surely he still ought to be brought to

[49] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1760, p. 357. See also *Edinburgh Magazine*, Aug. 1760, p.417; *Newcastle Magazine*, Sept. 1760, p. 493.
[50] *Edinburgh Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 322; *London Magazine*, Jul. 1760, p. 370; *Royal Magazine*, Jun. 1760, pp. 327-335.
[51] *Universal Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 365.

Europe, and suffer publically for his atrocious offence'.[52] Once again, analogies with Amboyna played a central role in underscoring the perceived injustice:

> The late attempt made at Calcutta by the Dutch, has surprised everybody. None expected that they would at this time have endeavoured to act a second part to the tragedy of Amboyna, where they cruelly massacred several innocent persons, for no other reason that because they were English traders, and consequently interfered in their commerce.[53]

Indeed, another account remarked how 'the motives for the massacre at Amboyna, and those for committing this violence, were so familiar, that they could not help drawing a comparison.'[54] The re-appearance of narratives drawn from material published in the preceding century reinforced this sense of parity. One account, revised and re-printed by the *Universal Magazine* across two editions in 1762, informed readers how 'a neatly engraved copperplate, expressive of the tortures inflicted on our unfortunate and innocent countrymen' would illustrate the publication. The same image had already appeared in numerous pamphlets throughout the preceding century.[55] The *Gentleman's Magazine* printed excerpts from a separate narrative, whose author thought it relevant at a time when the Dutch 'were endeavouring to justify their late intended hostilities against the English settlements at Bengal.'[56] Despite their separation in terms of time and context, Chinsurah and Amboyna were synonymous, illustrations of the violent enemies - native and European alike - that continued to threaten British interests. A sense of equivalence emphasised in an earlier edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine*:

> To thee [Clive], her safety twice Bengalia owes,
> Alike from Indian and Battavian foes;
> Hence in no dungeon now her sons remain,
> Nor of a new Amboyna's fate complain.'[57]

[52] *Royal Magazine*, Jul. 1760, pp. 38-39
[53] Ibid.
[54] Anon, *Complete History of the War in India*, p. 57.
[55] *Universal Magazine,* Jun. 1760, p. 372; Jul. 1760, p. 34. For details of the engraving see Games, 'Violence on the Fringes', pp. 517-520.
[56] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jul. 1762, pp. 308-311.
[57] Ibid., Jul. 1760, p. 337.

Of particular significance, however, is the presentation of Chinsurah as duplicitous in nature, the violence seemingly made worse by underhand motivations.

To a certain degree, public outrage expressed in the wake of Chinsurah was simply indicative of anti-Dutch sentiment more generally. Although no longer considered as significant a military threat as they had been in previous decades, their perceived clandestine support for France throughout the Seven Years' War certainly aggravated Anglo-Dutch relations. An article in the *Universal Magazine*, for instance, explained how in spite of their declared neutrality the Dutch had continued to supply French forces in North America with provisions, to the 'manifest hurt' of British settlers there.[58] Similar arguments appeared in a five-page list of grievances that appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and *Edinburgh Magazine*. Outlining all of the alleged incidences where the Dutch had undermined British military efforts, the piece asked 'are they not stabbing us to the vitals in open day light whilst we are combating shadows? For such are the French without Dutch assistance and protection'.[59] Yet in terms of public discourse relating to India, specifically, accusations of Dutch duplicity acquired an added sense of gravity, precisely because of the violence they had apparently committed there.

A sardonic account printed by the *Edinburgh Magazine* suggested 'the affair we have just had in this part of the world with our good friends the Dutch, will, no doubt, surprise you. But to us, who have been eye witness the encroaching selfish temper of this people, it was what we expected.'[60] This image of a one-time ally betraying Britain's trust is a prominent theme. Another author, despite showing clear bias in favour of Clive who had coordinated the Company response to Chinsurah, argued it was a pity 'the massacre at Amboyna was not in some measure revenged at this opportunity', but that time 'effaces from memory the most unwarrantable and cruel actions of perfidious friends'.[61] A piece in the *Royal Magazine* expressed similar feelings, stating how the Dutch had 'long since shown their true sentiments with regard to the English; but never in so outrageous a manner as in the affair of Calcutta.'[62] Accusations of this kind appeared throughout conflict. The *London Magazine* reported in 1763, for instance, how in every part of India

[58] *Universal Magazine,* Jun. 1760, p. 366.
[59] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jan. 1761, p. 26; *Edinburgh Magazine*, Feb. 1761, pp. 69-72.
[60] *Edinburgh Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 322.
[61] Anon, *A Complete History of the War in India*, p. 51. The excessive deference afforded to Clive was criticised in the *Critical Review*, Aug. 1761, p. 142; *Monthly Review*, Aug. 1761, p. 157.
[62] *Royal Magazine*, Jul. 1760, p. 39.

the Dutch 'favoured our enemies in an underhand manner as much as they could; and at last they resolved upon an open attack, either directly upon our settlements in Bengal, or indirectly by attacking Jafar ally Cawn'.[63] Repeatedly emphasising themes such as dishonesty and deception allowed commentators to demonise those who they wished to present as a threat to British interests. Yet in terms of the focus for this chapter, the real importance is not so much the use of violence to portray the Dutch as duplicitous, rather how those same accusations would also come to be associated with, and used as, justification for the overthrow of Mir Jafar.

The Second Revolution and Abdication of Mir Jafar

A comparison of changing reactions to the Chinsurah episode provides an indication of the gradual extension of public criticism from the Dutch to Mir Jafar, and the evolving narrative that emphasised the shared culpability of Mir Jafar. A letter from a Royal Navy officer printed by the *Royal Magazine* before details of Chinsurah had reached British shores remarked how it was expected the Dutch would cause a disturbance somewhere, but that 'our friend Mir Jafar has prohibited them the exportation of salt petre from Bengal'.[64] Cordial sentiments of this kind continued in the immediate aftermath of Chinsurah. Initial reports, such as one printed by the *British Magazine*, explained how 'our Nabob, with whom we are in strict friendship and alliance, demanded our assistance at the first notice, and ordered us to prohibit any Dutch boats from bringing any arms or troops up the river'.[65] The relationship between the Company and Mir Jafar appears strong here, as does the influence that Britain seemed to exert over the Nawab:

> The Dutch, greatly terrified at the terrible destruction that now threatened them, implored our mediation with the Nabob, and offered any terms to have their lives and properties secured, as they told us they saw their error now too late, and acknowledged themselves as the sole offenders.[66]

Similar views appeared in the *London Magazine* with a letter that explained how the Dutch 'had resolved to pick a quarrel' with the Nawab, precisely because he favoured the British

[63] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1763, p. 79.
[64] *Royal Magazine*, Mar. 1760, p. 163.
[65] Ibid., Jul. 1760, pp. 445-446.
[66] Ibid.

and was 'grateful for the favour we had done him'.[67] Another piece remarked how in the aftermath of Chinsurah the Dutch had written to Clive 'in the most submissive terms, begging that he would be so good as to intercede for them and not suffer them to be given up to the violence of the moors'.[68] Admittedly, much of this commentary reflected the opinions, or at least sympathies, of those who had profited from the accession of Mir Jafar in 1757. It made sense for individuals like Clive, who had induced the Mir Jafar to betray Siraj-ud-Daulah at Plassey, to present the new regime as a benefit to Britain and largely acquiescent - the Dutch are responsible for Chinsurah here, not Mir Jafar. Rival interests within the Company, however, both in India and at home, held different views of the Nawab as well as the military backing that had initially secured his throne, the concerned parties in this case being those who wanted 'Clive's Nabob' replaced with one more sympathetic to their own aims.[69] Coverage of Chinsurah and the violent unrest that followed elevated those private disagreements to a public stage.

Although presented chiefly in terms of Dutch duplicity, those who supported the removal of Mir Jafar benefited from news polemic that presented the Nawab as a guilty party. An account in the *Edinburgh Magazine* remarked how victory over the Dutch was all:

> The more happy for us as had it gone otherwise, in all probability the interest of the English in Bengal would have greatly suffered; for the new Nabob, whether from some secret correspondence with the enemy, or from the natural treachery of the people, stood by with a considerable army to join the victorious party, whatever side should get the better.[70]

The same accusation appeared in another publication, which repeated the claim that Mir Jafar had:

> Put all his troops in readiness to march at a moment's notice, but never once offered to assist the English (...) he stood an idle spectator, at the head of his numerous army all the while that

[67] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1762, p. 59.
[68] Ibid., Feb. 1763, p. 82.
[69] Mir Jafar was frequently referred to as 'Clive's Nawab'. Clive had concluded the secret deal to overthrow Siraj-ud Dualah at Plassey in 1757. See for instance *Court and Country Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 34.
[70] *Edinburgh Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 324.

> hostilities were committing, which was sufficient to make the English imagine he proposed declaring for the conqueror.[71]

This low opinion of the Nawab is very different from the more positive image offered by the previous sources. A violent revolt that erupted in the Bahar province shortly after Chinsurah provided further opportunity to depict Mir Jafar as a calculating, scheming, and altogether untrustworthy character. Indeed, these events were presented as a turning point in British attitudes towards the Nawab, that under the mask of a spaniel 'he conceded the heart of a tiger; in a word, he was ambitious, cool, cunning, prying, cruel and splenetic.[72] Following news of his removal in October 1760, explicit attacks against the character and conduct of Mir Jafar become even more evident, supporting a narrative that provided justification for this second revolution.

As occurred with coverage afforded to the removal of Siraj-ud-Daulah, themes concerned with the connection between violent behaviour and a morally impaired character were also prominent in public discourse relating to Mir Jafar. Underlining this point, accusations the Nawab had perpetrated petty acts of violence against his own people appeared throughout the press. Once again, these descriptions drew upon popular imagery that focussed on the vices associated with 'eastern' forms of government. The *Gentleman's Magazine* printed an account by Vansittart, chief proponent of the second revolution, who explained how Mir Jafar was:

> Extremely tyrannical, avaricious, and indolent, and the people about him being abject slaves, or the instruments of his vices, there was no chance of having the government properly conducted but by their removal. He attributed the ill success of his affairs to imaginary plots and contrivances, and sacrificed numberless lives without mercy to his excess of jealousy.[73]

Similar observations appeared in the *Court and Country Magazine*, which reviewed an address made by Holwell to the Board of Directors. The piece claimed the Nawab was divested of power to prevent his ability to do greater mischief, 'as by a series of maladministration and cruelties he had well nigh brought himself, his family, the provinces,

[71] Anon, *Complete History of the War in India,* pp. 51-52.
[72] Ibid.
[73] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 52.

and the Company, to destruction, so that it became a reproach to the English name and arms to support his tyrannic government any longer'.[74] A separate publication also drew attention to this alleged brutality, highlighting the innumerable occasions where the Nawab had spilt the blood of his own subject 'without the least reason assigned'. [75] One particular instance had involved the surviving family members of Siraj-ud-Daula, who were allegedly 'taken from their confinement, and having carried them out a midnight upon the river, massacred and drowned them'. As another commentator summarised, the 'whole term of his government was a uniform chain of cruelty, tyranny and oppression'.[76] These reports of violence called into question the suitability of Mir Jafar as a ruler. Yet where violence committed by Siraj-ud-Daulah represented the actions of an irrational and erratic personality, commentators framed violent acts instigated or condoned by Mir Jafar primarily as demonstration of his duplicity. It is the sense of betrayal and deception that would mainly feature as justification for his removal from power.

Dispatches printed by the *Scots Magazine* reported how the Company had forced the Nawab to abdicate because of 'his cruelties, weak conduct, and maladministration in general'.[77] Similar views appeared in a later edition of the *Universal Magazine*, which explained how correspondence between Company officials had warned of 'his jealousy of English power, and of his refusal of every favour that was asked'.[78] Reinforcing that point, the article emphasised how the clandestine alliance between the Dutch and Mir Jafar had led directly to the Chinsurah episode:

> It is said in the treaty that our enemies should be his enemies; but it is beyond doubt that he urged the Dutch to send for forces to oppose to ours. We have an original letter of the Directors to the Nabob, which plainly implies, that it was with his consent those troops, were sent for.[79]

Another account in the *London Magazine* offered even stronger criticism, explaining how Mir Jafar:

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[74] *Court and Country Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 34.
[75] Anon, *Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal* (London, 1764), pp. 19-20.
[76] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 109.
[77] *Scots Magazine*, Jul. 1761, p. 385.
[78] *Universal Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 158.
[79] Ibid.

> Had been scarce seated in his government, when he entered into a secret negotiation with the Dutch (...) to counteract and destroy our power and influence; a measure wicked as foolish. That he was guilty of the deepest deceit and treachery towards us, his benefactors and allies, in repeated instances. That whilst our officers and troops were suffering every distress, and hazard of their lives in defence of him, his son, and country, our commander in chief was basely and treacherously deserted, by father and son.[80]

Interestingly, criticisms of this sort encouraged fresh interpretations of violence allegedly committed by Siraj-ud-Daulah, with a similar emphasis placed on the idea of duplicity and collusion. An account in the *London Magazine* from March 1761, for instance, explained how the French were 'more dextrous than our people are at gaining an influence over persons of quality in all countries', which in the case of Siraj-ud-Daulah had 'imbibed the Nawab with so much of their deceitful politics'.[81] A later publication reinforced the point stating the French 'by flattery got the direction of the young and vain viceroy of that province, and as soon as they had done this, they set him upon committing those cruelties against our people, the horror of which everyone has heard of.'[82] The parallels between French collusion with Siraj-ud-Daulah, and the Dutch courting of Mir Jafar appeared clear, reinforcing public discourse that sought to justify both revolutions the Company had instigated.

Far from embodying the image of a strong ruler who was of benefit to British interests, commentary printed in the wake of Chinsurah portrayed Mir Jafar as weak and dishonourable. Some even presented his decision to abdicate in terms of a lack of conviction, the *Annual Register* stating how as ambition 'was the feeblest of his passions, he consented quietly to quit the throne'.[83] Again, these criticisms were an attack on the Nawab personally, but they also represented an indictment of 'eastern' despotism as a political system more generally. As correspondence between Holwell, and the commander of British forces in Bengal at that time, exclaimed 'the more we see of this government, the

[80] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 109.
[81] Ibid., p. 125.
[82] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1762, p. 61.
[83] *Annual Register of the year 1761* (London, 1762), p. 57.

more is verified (...), that it is rotten to the core'.[84] The author of another article printed by the *London Magazine*, expressed similar sentiments, 'that by his misconduct [the Nawab] had brought the affairs of the company as well as his own into the most imminent danger of being ruined'.[85] These perceived failings had underpinned the justifications made for the first revolution in 1757, and did so again with second in 1760.

Individuals who benefited from the installation of a new regime produced and supported publications that vilified Mir Jafar, such accounts used to justify the decision to overthrow him. Conversely, that such validatory material was necessary at all indicates the range of discussions evidently taking place in response to Company actions. Indeed, certain commentators cautioned readers against taking what was clearly biased material at face value. An anonymous account that featured in the *Critical Review,* for instance, was heavily criticised:

> This narrative is addressed to Mr Clive, and the author seems to intend it for an express panegyric on the military conduct of that fortunate gentleman, who, we believe is by this time heartily sick of the mawkish fumes of adulation thrust up his nostrils by the patriot inhabitants of Grubstreet.[86]

Yet by considering such commentary as part of a wider public engagement with the East Indies conflict, the range of opinions expressed constitutes more than just rival propaganda. Crucially, it is from press exposure afforded to these personal animosities that a more complex debate concerning British involvement in India would emerge, arguments that would feature heavily in public discourse over the coming decades. News commentary relating to the third revolution in 1763, and the overthrow of Mir Jafar's successor amidst further accusations of violence, provides further indication of this process.

Mir Cossim, Patna, and the Third Revolution

Thanks to his alleged involvement in the Chinsurah affair and unrest that followed in the Bihar province, the Company forced Mir Jafar to abdicate in October 1760 in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Cossim. The new Nawab, however, soon proved as troublesome as Mir

[84] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 131.
[85] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 109.
[86] *Critical Review*, Aug. 1761, p. 142.

Jafar and Siraj-ud-Daula had before him. Despite making similar commitments that he would continue to respect the exclusivity of British trading rights, Mir Cossim quickly exploited divisions within the Council at Fort William, re-establishing a degree of autonomy from Company influence in the process. Emboldened by this apparent timidity, as well as benefiting from improved relations with the Mughal Emperor and the neighbouring Nawab of Oudh, Mir Cossim re-equipped his military with modern European weaponry, in direct contravention of terms agreed with the British.[87] After a series of perceived slights from Company officials, open hostilities erupted in June 1763. The brief conflict that followed was noteworthy for its violence, including the execution of a British envoy at Murshidabad and an alleged massacre of English prisoners at Patna later that year. In spite of those setbacks, British forces completely routed Mir Cossim and his allies at Buxar in 1764. The Company then returned Mir Jafar to the throne in what became the third change of government they had instigated in Bengal since the start of the Seven Years' War.[88]

As with events leading up to the previous revolutions, the violent circumstances that contributed to the removal of Mir Cossim attracted significant attention from the news press. In many respects, much of the commentary was remarkably similar to that generated by the fall of Calcutta in 1756, and the Dutch incursion at Chinsurah in 1760. An article printed by the *Critical Review*, for instance, explained how the Nawab had ordered the murder of two Company agents, Mr Amyatt and Mr Woolaston, *after* they had completed diplomatic talks with him.[89] Correspondence in the *London Magazine* referred to it as a 'treacherous murder', whilst another piece in the *Public Advertiser* stated how their heads were 'struck upon the walls and gateways' of a Company settlement that had also been sacked by the Nawab.[90] An account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* made similar observations about these apparent displays of 'flagitious tyranny and oppression', going as far to say the 'cruelties and extortions' of Mir Cossim were even worse than those of his predecessors.[91] Indeed, in an echo of the Black Hole affair, another report in the *London Evening Post* described how the Nawab had taken English prisoners at Dacca and put them into a dungeon:

[87] *Universal Magazine,* Mar. 1764, pp. 155-157.
[88] Lawford, *Britain's Army in India*, pp. 299-318.
[89] *Critical Review*, Feb. 1764, p. 150.
[90] *London Magazine*, May 1764, p. 235; *Public Advertiser*, 17 May 1764.
[91] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 54-55.

> Afterwards he ordered two of them to be brought out and put to death in the most cruel manner; which coming to the knowledge of the rest, they resolved to defend themselves to the last extremity; on which the Nabob had the place set fire to, and they were all suffocated.[92]

As occurred with the first two revolutions, news coverage claimed the violence was evidence of an emotionally unstable individual, a later piece in the *Critical Review* attesting to his 'strange state of mind', and commenting how:

> With assertions and oaths he denies he had any hand in the death of Mr Amyatt (…) and that it happened by mistake without his order, laments it and apologises for it; and at the same time seems quite insensible of having done amiss in the orders given for the massacre of the English prisoners that remained in his power.[93]

Unpredictable and seemingly irrational behaviour of this sort reinforced an image of the Nawab as a vindictive, bloodthirsty tyrant, as occurred with Mir Jafar and Siraj-ud-Daulah before him. Indeed, as seemingly the third Nawab in row to exhibit such traits, public criticism of Mir Cossim became increasingly interchangeable with negative depictions of both his predecessors and the broader system they all represented – duplicitous, erratic, and despotic.

Clear parallels with the civilian casualties reported after Calcutta was captured in 1756 underlined the severity of violence allegedly committed by Mir Cossim in 1763. A piece in the *British Magazine*, for instance, emphasised how Mr Amyatt, who was murdered by the Nawab, had 'endeavoured to make the enemy's troops understand that he was furnished with the Nabob's passports, and had no design of committing any hostilities', but was killed all the same.[94] Another account conveyed the sense of panic experienced by British settlers as they fled this seemingly indiscriminate violence:

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[92] *London Evening Post*, 10 May 1764.
[93] *Critical Review,* Apr. 1765, pp. 339-343.
[94] *British Magazine*, Apr. 1764, p. 218.

> Oh! My dear Sir! How shall I relate this melancholy scene! The troops were all in disorder; the whole was confusion; no commanders, nor no one to obey (...) During our passage to Luckypore, we run the risk of starving, drowning, or being taken prisoners, the last of which would have been as terrible as the former. Good God! How could I have supported it, to have seen my family taken prisoners by such ruffians and villains![95]

As discussed previously, news of British colonists forced into abandoning their homes because of frontier raids portrayed Amerindians as cruel and indifferent to European rules concerning the treatment of non-combatants. Accounts from Bengal of Britons fleeing an advancing Mughal army, seemingly bent on indiscriminate violence drew upon the same themes and literary tropes.

With the arrival of news that a massacre of British prisoners had occurred at Patna in October 1763, descriptions of the violence orchestrated by Mir Cossim became even more explicit.[96] One account reported that under the instructions of a 'monster of cruelty', a 'cruel butchery' had been carried out.[97] Another source printed by the *Lloyd's Evening Post,* reported how the Nawab:

> Had committed the most barbarous massacre at Patna on our people, to the number of about 58, mostly covenanted servants and military officers, who were unfortunately his prisoners, dragging them out one after the other, and butchering them all in one day in the most cruel and unheard of manner. Unsatisfied with this, he continued to massacre to every private European in his possession, and even of his own subjects; he has not left a man alive of either power or substance in his country.[98]

Versions of the same account appeared in various newspapers, its placement in the *London Chronicle* of particular interest due to another article printed immediately after it that detailed similar outrages committed by the Delaware. Again, the placement encouraged

[95] *Public Advertiser*, 17 May 1764.
[96] *Universal Magazine,* May 1764, p. 274; Walter K. Ferminger (eds.), *The Diaries of Three Surgeons at Patna*, 1763 (Calcutta, 1909).
[97] *London Evening Post*, 14 Jun. 1764.
[98] Ibid., 15 Jun. 1764.

obvious comparisons with frontier violence committed in North America.[99] The author of another piece in the *Public Advertiser* encouraged everyone to acquaint themselves with the circumstances that had led to 'bloody and expensive war, against Cossim Ally Cawn, in the massacre of every man of rank among the country people, as well as of every Englishman who fell into the Tyrant's hands'.[100] As with coverage afforded to the Black Hole affair, larger accounts that followed in the wake of initial news reports helped to give the massacre a broader sense of narrative. The *Gentleman's Magazine* confirmed that a German mercenary in service of the Nawab, Reinhardt Someroo, had carried out the massacre itself. Described as the 'infamous villain', the account confirmed that '49 gentlemen, 25 of them in irons, were murdered in one house, with about 50 soldiers in irons, and 9 gentlemen, with the remaining part of the Englishmen who were prisoners, were put to death in other parts of the country (...) amounting in the whole to about 200'.[101] Similar details appeared in many of the prominent magazines, including reports of violence also committed against the indigenous inhabitants. The *Scots Magazine* stated that up to 4000 civilians in the British interest were 'inhumanly murdered in cold blood'.[102] The local governor, for instance, along with 27 members of his family were apparently 'thrown into the river, and the bodies of the others were exposed to be devoured by the beasts and birds of prey, and a guard of Sepoys set over them to prevent their relations from burning them according to the custom of their religion'.[103] The breadth and apparent maliciousness of this violence attracted significant interest from news commentators, who used a familiar repertoire of literary tropes associated with this sort of incident, to articulate key themes.

As with coverage of the Black Hole affair, and renewed interest with Amboyna, much of the coverage afforded to the Patna massacre emphasised the heroism of those Britons who had perished. A lengthy account printed in the *London Magazine* explained how after the British had finished their evening meal, Someroo and a body of troops:

> Sent for Mr Ellis and Lushington, who being acquainted he had private business with them immediately went to him, and were

[99] *London Chronicle*, 16 Jun. 1764; *London Evening Post*, 16 Jun. 1764; *London Gazette*, 12 Jun. 1764.
[100] *Public Advertiser***,** 4 Jul. 1764.
[101] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jun. 1764, p. 300.
[102] *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1764, p. 627.
[103] Ibid., Jun. 1764, pp. 341-344; *Universal Magazine*, Jun. 1764, pp. 329-332; *London Magazine*, Jun. 1764, p. 324.

> instantly cut down; afterwards Mr Hay, Lyon and Jones, were sent for and dispatched in the same manner, as were likewise Mr Chambers, Amphlett, and Gulston (...) the bodies of our gentlemen were most of them thrown into a well in the compound of the house they were confined in.[104]

Another account corroborated these details, and placed even greater emphasis on the fruitless bravery of the Britons involved:

> At night when [Someroo] arrived, he stood some distance in the cook room to give his orders, and as soon as Mr Ellis and Lushington entered, the former was seized by the hair, pulling his head backward another cut his throat, on which Mr Lushington immediately knocked him down with his fist, seized his sword, killed one, and wounded two more before he was himself cut down; after which the gentlemen, being alarmed by Mr Smith, stood on their defence, and repulsed the Seapoys with plates and bottles. Someroo then ordered them to the top of the house to fire down on the prisoners (...) All the private men were likewise murdered by sixty at a time, and the bloody minded villain carried his resentment so far as to put a young child of Mr Ellis's to death.[105]

Despite succumbing to a violent end, the victims are presented here as paragons of British virtue - resolute and fearless to the end.[106] To reinforce that point, the *London Magazine* printed a letter, purportedly written by one of the prisoners just prior to his murder:

> I expect my fate this night (...) this is no surprise to me, for I expected it all along; I must therefore, as a dying man, request of you to collect and remit my estate home as soon as possible and write a comforting letter to my father and mother. Let them know

[104] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1764, p. 324.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Conversely, these images of stoic resolve were the exact opposite offered by those other reports, which had recounted panicked and fleeing settlers. That such differences existed, however, further demonstrates the various themes such accounts could articulate simultaneously.

> I die bravely, as a Christian ought, for a fear not him who kill they body and no more[107]

Although the author is shown as resigned to his fate, the sense of dignity received particular praise from the magazine editors, who remarked that Dr Anderson had shown 'a fortitude and composure (under so dismal a prospect) that would do honour to the greatest names, ancient or modern'. Another casualty, Henry Lushington, received similar attention, in part because he also had the unfortunate distinction of being a survivor of the Black Hole affair.[108] Taken as a whole, the underlying message conveyed by all of these reports was the same as that conveyed by news of violence committed in North America - the suffering of valiant but ultimately defenceless Britons was both shocking and demanded action.

Drawing upon the same criticisms and themes expressed in public discourse relating to the overthrow of Siraj-ud-Daulah and Mir Jafar, commentators used violence committed by Mir Cossim as a means of justifying his removal by the Company. Details of violent acts were demonstrative of an individual unfit to be a legitimate ruler, a 'villain' who needed to be defeated or as the *Gentleman's Magazine* hoped, driven into 'a wretched exile in a country where he must live, while he does live, in perpetual fear of a most tormenting death'.[109] On each occasion, Company involvement had apparently avenged a perceived injustice and disposed of those who might commit further outrages in the future. Underpinning these arguments was a popular image of eastern despotism, one that had developed rapidly from 1754-64 in part as a result of violence reported throughout the period. Such a system of government appeared to encourage and condone tyrannical rule, but also made British intervention seem acceptable, even desirable by comparison. Accordingly, an increased Company presence not only benefited Britain but also the indigenous population, justifications that would later crystallize into the moral pretext of a 'civilising mission'. Yet despite similarities in the way coverage of violence during the Seven Years' War had attempted to legitimise British interference in India, of perhaps greater significance is the extent that public engagement with these episodes also included voices of a more sceptical disposition, discourse typically associated with the period after 1764.

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[107] *London Magazine*, Jul. 1764, p. 335.
[108] *London Evening Post*, 14 Jun. 1764; *Public Advertiser*, 28 Jun. 1763.
[109] *London Chronicle*, 16 Jun. 1764; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Jun. 1764, p. 300; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 13 Jun. 1764.

Broader Implications

As with the mixed reactions that greeted the abdication of Mir Jafar in 1760, coverage afforded to violence committed by Mir Cossim and his subsequent removal in 1763 provided a vehicle for Company officials to express disagreements in public. Those disputes formed part of a broader public discussion relating to India that had developed throughout the conflict. Although most commentators condemned the alleged outrages and accepted the need to remove Mir Cossim, that consensus fell apart with explanations as to why the situation had arisen in the first place. A series of pamphlets printed early in 1764 attempted to shed light on the developing situation in Bengal and explain how Mir Cossim had been elevated to the throne in the 1760 - the general view being that it was this decision that had ultimately led to the Patna massacre. The *Gentleman's Magazine* provided a full summary of those works it considered most relevant, similar reviews appearing in *Court and Country Magazine* and *Universal Magazine*. The latter of those publications stated how the issue had 'been so much the subject of conversation, and has been followed by such important events in India, that it must afford satisfaction to our readers to see here a more particular detail'.[110] One of the named pamphlets, *Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal*, outlined the various factional disputes that had racked the Council since the arrival of Governor Vansittart in 1760. Compiled from personal correspondence, as well as dispatches to the Board of Directors, the piece explored various concerns relating to Vansittart's support for Mir Cossim, and his decision to relinquish economic privileges previously granted to the Company by Mir Jafar. From the outset, the pamphlet emphasised the sense of division present within the Council, and the violence this had led to on the ground. As the opening paragraph declared, 'the commotions in Bengal appear to have had their rise from the misconduct of the Company's servants abroad and the Directors at home'.[111] The impact of this personal animosity, in terms of the public debate that followed, was clear. The *Monthly Review* explained how:

> Our late disasters in the East Indies have produced a glut of pamphlets for and against the Directors of the Company and their servants abroad. The judgement to be passed on these pieces, depends altogether on the authenticity of the facts alleged,

[110] *Universal Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 155; *Gentleman's Magazine*, Feb. 1764, pp. 51-55; *Court and Country Magazine*, Feb. 1764, pp. 34-36.
[111] Anon, *Reflections on the Present Commotions in Bengal* (London, 1764), p. 3.

> concerning which we will not presume to determine (…) we shall leave everyone to peruse the arguments at large, as his leisure or inclination shall permit him.[112]

The difference of opinion concerning initial British support for Mir Cossim was of such extent that some commentators expressed frustration over the contradictory nature of reports from Bengal. A piece in *Court and County* declared the numerous publications 'throw very little, if any light, on the true and immediate cause of the present state of the affairs in Bengal'. The *Critical Review* shared these sentiments, 'we cannot follow this narrative through all its events, which receives such different casts from the different manners of relating them that they scarcely appear to be the same'.[113] Despite the partisanship, it is thanks to Company infighting that some of the most interesting public discussions relating to India were able to take place.

Press reaction to the alleged outrages committed by Mir Cossim was overwhelmingly negative and largely focussed on criticising the shocking nature of the violence, as well as the moral integrity of the individual who apparently orchestrated it. Yet because those actions also raised questions as to why Mir Cossim had received even initial support from Britain, what emerged were concerns relating to the wisdom of wider Company involvement in India. In March 1764, the *Gentleman's Magazine* printed details of correspondence between Holwell, who supported Vansittart's decision to elevate Mir Cossim to power, and Col. Caillaud, the commander of British forces in Bengal. The account explained how those who had agreed to remove Mir Jafar did so on the basis 'of his repeated cruelties, murders, and oppressions, daily committed by him', and the belief that if the Company had continued to support 'a system of usurpation and tyranny', the future of the entire British settlement would have been placed in jeopardy.[114] Interestingly, and in contrast with the more neutral tone used by the previous account, the magazine drew attention to two further letters, which they argued had 'set the whole question in a very clear light, and will perhaps be thought an irrefragable proof, that all the crimes imputed to Jafar, if true, do not justify the revolution in question'. Crucially, in spite of the violence apparently committed by Mir Jafar, the account demonstrated that Caillaud had cautioned against any attempt to remove him from power:

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[112] *Monthly Review*, Mar. 1764, p. 247.
[113] *Court and Country Magazine*, Feb. 1764, p. 34; *Critical Review*, Feb. 1764, pp. 149-151.
[114] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1764, pp. 130-133.

> Bad as the man may be, whose cause we now support, I cannot be of opinion that we can get rid of him for a better, without running the risk of much greater inconveniences attending on a such a change, that those we now labour under (...) In such a case, it is very possible we may raise a man to the dignity, just as unfit to govern, as little to be depended upon, and, in short, as great rogue as our Nabob; but perhaps not so great a coward, nor so great a fool, and on consequence much more difficult to manage.[115]

Printed amidst news of the Patna massacre the message was clear, by replacing Mir Jafar with Mir Cossim the Company had unwittingly unleashed an even more violent force, 'a change from bad to worse'. Continued meddling of this sort would lead to the complete destruction of British interests in Bengal:

> There is too much reason to fear, that pecuniary advantages of Nabob-making to the Company's servants abroad, will at length be fatal to their interest in that part of the world (...) The Nabobs finding, that as long we are able to depose them, their royalty will be precarious, will whenever it is in their power, put an end to this ability at once, by expelling us from the country , a period which perhaps is not now far distant.[116]

An account in the *London Magazine* expressed similar concerns, warning how 'open and warlike assistance' provided to rival claimants in India threatened ‘the pace and tranquillity of Europe'.[117] Opinions of this sort are revealing as they suggest public scepticism concerning British interference in Mughal affairs was not restricted to the decades after the Seven Years’ War but had already started to formulate during the conflict itself.

Commentary relating to earlier violent episodes lends weight to this idea of an embryonic debate concerning Company policy in India. Crucially, this material also demonstrates how the nature of that public discussion had, in itself, evolved over the course of the hostilities. In 1756, for instance, British forces assisted a group of southern

[115] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1764, pp. 130-133.
[116] Ibid.
[117] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1762, p. 60.

Maratha states to defeat the piratical kingdom of Tulagee Angria, blockading and capturing his fortress at Gheriah on the Malabar Coast. Although widely recognised as a 'dangerous enemy', one raised to power by 'rapine and violation of laws natural and divine' and who ruled over 'a nest of thieves so troublesome to the commerce of European states', not all commentators celebrated the demise of Angria in as bellicose fashion.[118] One account printed in 1758 raised concerns that Britain had 'joined to ruin an enemy, it is true, but an enemy, in whose place another power far superior in strength is substituted, and whom there is no more safely trusting than Angria himself.'[119] Similar observations appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* with a piece that lambasted the local Maratha for a 'cowardly' attempt to seize the fort after it had surrendered to British forces. In light of such behaviour, Company support seemed perplexing:

> You will doubtless wonder there should be such a race of poltroons upon the face of the earth, but it is most true they exist, and that we are in alliance with them, and have give them the material advantages of a victory, in which, excepting the appearance of power, they were the least useful.[120]

Once again, the message is that a lack of foresight and interference in regional disputes had the potential to damage British interests in the long term. As the account by Grose cautioned, 'there is no such thing as either quarrelling with the Marattas to advantage, nor trusting to them with safety', remarks shared in the later piece produced by Cambridge Owen 'they are a destructive foe and an unserviceable friend'.[121] Such concerns, to begin with at least, were often only general recommendations of prudence by individual commentators. Yet as the conflict and nature of Company involvement in Mughal affairs escalated, so too did initial apprehensions start to evolve into a more sustained and focussed public criticism. Once again, coverage afforded to violent episodes throughout 1756-64 helped to influence and articulate that emerging cynicism.

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[118] Accounts relating to the capture of Gheriah appeared throughout 1756-64.See Anon, *An Authentick and Faithful History of that Arch-Pyrate Tulagee Angria* (London, 1756). *Newcastle Magazine*, Feb. 1757, p. 90; *Scots Magazine*, Apr. 1758, p. 179; *Annual Register of the Year 1758* (London, 1759), p. 14; *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 291; *Critical Review*, May 1761, p. 354.
[119] Grose, *A Voyage to the East-Indies*, p. 154.
[120] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1757, p. 114.
[121] Grose, *Voyage to the East Indies*, p. 127; Cambridge Owen quoted in *Critical Review*, May 1761, p. 353.

A lengthy piece produced by the *London Magazine* in June 1760 described the 'clamour' for a parliamentary enquiry into the fall of Calcutta and 'miserable death of so many of our countrymen in the Black Hole'.[122] Interestingly, the Company itself came under particular scrutiny for the selfishness and incompetency that had seemingly allowed the violence to occur:

> It is the duty of those who have the honour to be of his majesty's council, especially his cabinet council, to have an eye to the conduct of such a company as our East India Company, and of every chief officer employed by them, in order to take care that the company shall not sacrifice the general interest of the nation to the particular interest of the Company, and that no chief officer shall sacrifice the interest of both to his own personal interest.[123]

Compared with frustrations expressed in response to the defeat of Angria, such calls for a general enquiry show the extent to which public uncertainty concerning the Company had already developed since the outbreak of hostilities in 1756. By the end of the conflict, this scepticism had shifted into outright cynicism for a number of commentators.

The *Annual Register* for 1764 included a summary of what it called the 'three capital revolutions' that had recently taken place in Bengal.[124] Although the account provided a routine overview of events, including the most significant reports of violence committed against British forces, the satirical tone expressed throughout is notable. Despite broadly agreeing with the necessity of Company action in 1757, 1760, and 1763, the editors believed that removing Mir Jafar in 1760 had laid the ground for even worse atrocities to be committed in the future:

> A prevailing party in the council of Calcutta, observing the subah so extremely weakened, provoked at any opposition from one whom they considered as their creature, and, perhaps, hoping to advance their fortunes by new revolutions, formed a design of deposing Mir Jafar from the throne, which he filled with so much uneasiness and incapacity. The crimes, however, with which they

[122] *London Magazine*, Jun. 1760, p. 291.
[123] Ibid., p. 293.
[124] *Annual Register of the Year 1764* (London, 1765), pp. 34-40.

> charged him, were evidently not of their cognisance; the injuries they pretended to have suffered seemed light and trivial; and the existence of the conspiracies against the interest of the English was not very clearly established.[125]

Rather than necessity, the decision to overthrow Mir Jafar is represented here as a greedy and opportunistic ploy. Even reports of violence allegedly perpetrated by the Nawab often portrayed him in a more favourable light. The murder of Siraj-ud-daulah's family, for instance, though acknowledged as terrible was for some the result of an 'agitated and anxious [mind]', one plagued by a host of 'difficulties and dangers' inflicted by the Company itself:

> He had no confidence in the great men who surrounded him: he was not without reason, jealous and fearful even of the English power, which had wrought so great a revolution in his favour. His treasury had been exhausted, and his best revenues mortgaged, to satisfy the sums which he had stipulated as an indemnification and a reward to them. And the privileges which he was obliged to grant them in trade, to the detriment of his customs, took away the few resources he had left.[126]

A letter addressed to the *London Magazine* expressed similar sentiments and emphasised the importance of context in dealing with these matters:

> Because [Mir Jafar] feared the English governor was mediating a revolution, in whose favour he know not, his fear pointed out these as the objects; and self preservation, not wanton cruelty, taught him the fatal remedy; For, I am well informed, Jaffier Ally Cawn as little merits the epithet of cruel as any man in Hindostan. No instances being given of his oppressions, I can only say, I cannot learn his government was uncommonly oppressive, the English had not right to be his judges.[127]

[125] *Annual Register of the Year 1764,* pp. 34-40.
[126] Ibid.
[127] *London Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 109.

Such commentary presented the violent behaviour of Mir Jafar as an understandable reaction to a series of unachievable demands. Indeed, there are strong parallels with public discourse that presented Amerindian violence as a legitimate response to colonial expansion. Coverage of hostilities in India drew attention to similar negative views relating to the Company presence there.

An account from 1759 outlined the cruelty of those Britons operating in Bengal, the Company agents described as the 'meanest of British subjects', who had founded their security 'on the poverty of the wretched natives' and concerned themselves only with 'oppressing the natives, enlarging their fortunes by any means, yet maintaining the appearance of expense and grandeur.'[128] As another piece argued, perfidious and untrustworthy as the Maratha states of southern India were:

> At least they do not, like a polite neighbouring nation in Europe, affect a parade of sincerity or good faith. They do not desire to be taken for honester than they are, and would be the first to laugh at those who should repose any confidence in them. They make no professions of friendship beyond words of common course, or set formularies of compliments, which they do not expect should be taken for more than they are worth.[129]

Commentary of this sort helped to articulate an emerging discussion relating to the perceived corruption, hypocrisy, but also arrogance of British actions throughout the region. As the *Annual Register* noted:

> The Company, which from a society of merchants has become arbiter of kingdoms, raises a deposes sovereigns by its clerks and warehouse-keepers; and the proprietors of India stock debate on the fate of princes and of nations, and dispose of them with all of the loftiness and all the power of a Roman senate.[130]

Recent studies, such as those by Green and Wilson have demonstrated how this growing resentment towards an emerging 'Nabob' class and the image of an 'Asiatic Plunderer',

[128] Anon, *The Modern Part of an Universal History* (London, 1759), p. 250.
[129] Grose, *Voyage to the East-Indies*, p. 134.
[130] *Annual Register of 1764*, pp. 34-41.

would feature heavily in later debates concerning perceived Company abuses.[131] As the *Critical Review* remarked shortly after the Seven Years' War, 'we are perhaps not singular in thinking, that the interest of England and the East India Company (...) are very different considerations', questioning also how a Nawab might be considered a 'monster of inhumanity', yet maintained in power by 'our high and mighty nabob makers' whenever it suited their agenda.[132] It is clear, however, that precursory elements of an explicit critical discourse had already started to form in the decade preceding 1765, facilitated by news commentary that had drawn attention to violence committed in India as and when it unfolded. This is not to say the Company did not receive negative attention before the Seven Years' War, rather coverage of violent episodes that took place during those hostilities provided a new dimension to earlier criticisms, one which started to explore and in places challenge the wider implications of European expansion.

Despite the relationship between critical sentiments expressed during the Seven Years' War and concerted public hostility expressed later in the century, there are still significant differences. Whereas strong humanitarian themes, as well as a growing appreciation for the cultures of India, underpinned exposure afforded to Company abuses from 1770 onwards, such considerations were often lacking from earlier commentary that was of a sceptical persuasion. Disapproval of Company interference in Bengal before 1764, for instance, did not necessarily entail a positive appraisal of the indigenous population. As the account by Col. Cailaud that appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* demonstrated, those who opposed meddling in the political affairs of Bengal did not often do so out of respect or concern for the local rulers:

> As to the injustice of supporting 'Mir Jafar', on account of his cruelties, oppressions, and his being detested in his government, I see so little chance, in this blessed country, of finding a man endued with the opposite virtues, I think may put with these vices, with which we no concern, if in other matters we find him fittest for our purpose.[133]

[131] Greene, *Confronting Empire*, p. 126-133; Wilson, *India Conquered*, pp. 121-158.
[132] *Critical Review*, Apr. 1765, p. 269, p. 273.
[133] *Gentleman's Magazine*, Mar. 1764, p. 131.

A view that Britain should not become too heavily involved in the governance of India was very different from expressing enthusiasm for the native populace, particularly where reports of violence were concerned. An article in the *Critical Review* drew attention to an apparent lack of compassion shown to British settlers during the sack of Calcutta in 1756. Describing how the fleeing Britons were 'reduced to the most horrid wretchedness' and that Siraj-ud-Daulah evidently thought 'them too contemptible for his notice', the Mughal forces are presented here as deserving little sympathy from British commentators, even if Company actions had potentially led to that violence in the first place.[134] A later piece printed by the *Scots Magazine*, approached the situation in India in a similar manner, reporting how in spite of the various outrages committed by Mir Cossim, he was still greeted with open arms by the neighbouring state of Oudah on account of the large amount of looted treasure that he brought with him. Such disregard for the violence that had been committed was apparently indicative of the nation at large, 'for in Indostan, more than in any other country in the world, money covers every crime, and sanctifies every character'.[135] The same disparaging opinion appeared in the wake of the Chinsurah episode, 'there is a natural treachery in these people, which is sufficient to account for their being so rarely steadfast in their agreements'.[136] The message was clear, the inhabitants and especially rulers of India had no sense of honour or restraint that could not be bought, something press coverage throughout 1754-64 had repeatedly sought to demonstrate. The period might have seen the beginnings of a critical discussion relating to Company policy in India, but that did not mean the people or government of India would be treated as an innocent or aggrieved party.

Even reports of violence directed against European rivals often expressed an underlying criticism of the native character, particularly in respect of military related matters. In 1761, for instance, the *Scots Magazine* printed terms of capitulation agreed during the siege of Pondicherry and drew attention to the apparent brutality of Britain's allies in the region. The piece explained how the French commander had demanded assurances from Britain that:

> Merely from a principle of justice and humanity, that the mother and sisters of Raza Saib be permitted to seek an asylum where

[134] *Critical Review*, Apr. 1763, p. 305.
[135] *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1764, p. 627.
[136] Anon, *A Complete History of the War in India*, p. 52.

> they please, or that they remain prisoners among the English, and be not delivered up into Mahommed Ally Cawn's, which are still red with the blood of the husband and father, which he has spilt, to the shame indeed of those who gave them up to him; but no less to the shame of the commander of the English army, who should not have allowed such a piece of barbarity to be committed in his camp.[137]

Such behaviour, as a separate article in the *Monthly Review* remarked, demonstrated why Britain should view military attitudes within India in a 'very contemptible light'.[138] An account in the *London Magazine* made similar criticisms, explaining how a detachment of French troops was attacked by a local Raja, who then used 'every method he could devise for cutting them off by the sword, or by famine, and even by poison, as the Indians think every method lawful, by which they can destroy a enemy'.[139] Once again, the apparent ruthlessness of native forces received little praise, even when a rival to Britain was on the receiving end of that violence. Significantly, commentators who emphasised the risks associated with exactly this sort of military encounter often reached the exact opposite conclusion to those who saw less involvement in India as the solution.

Despite emerging humanitarian critiques that presented violence committed against Britons as explicable - a response to external interference in Mughal affairs - other examples of press coverage took those same circumstances to be an illustration of precisely why Britain needed to be forthright in its dealings with India. Criticism of the Company, in this sense, is not that it was belligerent, rather too cautious. A piece printed by the *Scots Magazine,* for instance, argued how the Company should 'keep up such an army of Europeans in Bengal as shall terrify the Nabobs of the country from hazarding a battle, and so keep the whole kingdom in continual peace, by keeping the natives in continual ignorance of the art of war'.[140] Similar themes appear in an earlier account, which explained how Indian merchants preferred to deal with the nation that appeared 'the most powerful and able to shelter them from the tyranny of their own countrymen'. Indeed, the piece claimed that 'it was impossible to carry on commerce on other than a precarious, dishonourable, disadvantageous footing, unless a state of force procures a respect to, or

[137] *Scots Magazine*, Jul. 1761, p. 383.
[138] *Monthly Review*, Apr. 1761, p. 253.
[139] *London Magazine*, Feb. 1763, p. 75.
[140] *Scots Magazine*, Nov. 1764, p. 627.

confidence in our arms'.[141] The perceived wisdom of such an approach was recognised by the *Critical Review*, who said of the author that 'he seems to be no stranger to the interest of England, and the proper means of promoting it in those parts; and makes some sensible remarks on our conduct in the East Indies.'[142] The critical discourse that emerged from 1756-64, therefore, was often very different from humanitarian arguments made later in the century. Instead, coverage of violence committed throughout the period allowed for growing public scepticism of the Company, but one still heavily grounded within a real-politic and commercial-focussed outlook. Such views show a disregard for questions concerned with the morality of British expansion and approach the issue primarily from a perspective of self-interest. As an early account printed in the *Universal Magazine* declared, if the East Indies trade 'be of the utmost consequence to Great Britain, it will follow, that it ought to be encouraged and supported. And perhaps, the only method of doing this effectually is by supporting the Company that are at present empowered to direct it.'[143] Security and mercantile prosperity take precedence here above other concerns.

One area where commentary produced from 1754-64 did potentially overlap with later humanitarian arguments is coverage that framed intervention in India as less a benefit to Britain, and more a positive development for India itself. Indeed, criticism of the Company did not necessarily mean a negative view of British influence more generally. As noted at the outset of this chapter, later reinterpretations of the three revolutions in Bengal framed those events as part an enlightened process or civilising mission, a selfless desire to bring stability and governance to the region.[144] Yet just as public scepticism towards the Company started to emerge before 1764 rather than after, so too had the supposed benefits of British expansion already started to promoted during the Seven Years' War, as events developed on the ground. Once again, coverage relating to violent episodes committed throughout the hostilities played a significant role in articulating the beginnings of this interventionist narrative. Crucially, this discourse would draw upon themes and arguments that earlier commentators had expressed relating to the Mughal Court and its perceived inability to prevent civil unrest.[145] An account printed by the *Literary Magazine* in 1757, for instance, explained how 'the great Mogul is not master of all the country which goes by the name of India', and that thanks to the great wealth of the local rulers they

[141] Grose, *Voyage to the East-Indies*, p. 404.
[142] *Critical Review*, Oct. 1757, p. 319
[143] *Universal Magazine*, Aug. 1756, p. 50.
[144] Teltscher, *India Inscribed,* pp. 111-114.
[145] See Chapter Two.

often made war against him.[146] Similar remarks appeared in the *Universal Magazine*, where it was said the provincial rulers 'do not always think themselves under an obligation of consulting [the Emperor] every time they make war against a neighbouring state, or any European settlement that may happen to be in their province.'[147] The 'terrible catastrophe at Calcutta' in 1756, was a 'melancholy instance' of what could happen because of this lack of central authority. This connection between a failing central government and the 'dreadful danger' it could unleash as a result is something that appears repeatedly in material printed throughout the period.[148]

Most accounts relating to violence committed against British forces were set against coverage that described the violence prevalent throughout the region as whole. The account by William Watts explained how:

> The power of the Mogul is rather nominal than real; that a kind of anarchy reigns through the country; and that where there is anything that resembles ever so imperfectly a form of government, it has force from it basis, is supported by fraud, and that in fact there is hardly any such thing as legal authority subsisting in any part of the empire.[149]

The same anarchic image later appeared in the *London Magazine*, which declared 'the country is become an almost continual scene of plots, conspiracies, civil wars, bloodshed, and robbery; such is the consequence of abolishing all principles of true religion and public spirit in any country'.[150] As with the North American frontier, India appeared as a contested space.[151] One effect of this unrest, as the account by Grose explained, was that many native inhabitants chose to 'bury their wealth in secret places, unknown often to their nearest relations, and even to their heirs'.[152] Such behaviour, as the author pointed out, was the result of a 'universal system of violence and injustice', something in his opinion would never happen under a free government. In an illustration of that very point, the account also described how peaceful life was for the British settlers in Bombay:

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[146] *Literary Magazine*, May 1757, p. 220.
[147] *Universal Magazine*, Jun. 1757, p. 267.
[148] *Critical Review*, Apr. 1763, p. 304.
[149] Watts, *Memoirs of the Revolution*, p. 9.
[150] *London Magazine* Feb. 1762, p. 60.
[151] Gould, 'Zones of Law, Zones of Violence', pp. 474-475.
[152] Grose, *Voyage to the East-Indies*, pp 132-133.

> Nothing has more contributed to the population of this island (Bombay) than the mildness of the government and toleration of all religions, there not being suffered the least violence or injury to be offered, either to the natives or Europeans on that account.[153]

Tolerance, security, economic prosperity, and effective governance, the apparent hallmarks of British rule. Considered within that context, British intervention in Bengal represented a riposte to eastern despotism and the violence it entailed for native and European alike. Although not as explicit as civilising narratives of later decades, the basic inference was still the same; the people of India could only benefit from increased British influence, not suffer. Whether or not the promotion of such arguments were sincere, in terms of professed humanitarian concern, is not important here. The significance is that such material represents an embryonic manifestation of themes more typically associated with a later period. Furthermore, whereas in the decades after 1764 humanitarian language would be used to scrutinise Company policy, coverage of violence produced during the Seven Years' War instead demonstrates how those same themes had initially been used not to challenge, but promote British involvement in the region as something that could free the native population from despotism.

Public exposure afforded to the revolutions of 1757, 1760, and 1763, and the violent circumstances associated with those events, reveal a degree of continuity in terms of themes and arguments used to justify the British response. Siraj-ud-Daulah, Mir Jafar, and Mir Cossim were all criticised in news reports for violence that went against European ideals of natural law and military convention. In turn, commentators cited these transgressions as evidence of the threat that each Nawab posed, as indications of their personal as well as moral failings, and finally as demonstration of the tyrannical behaviour that eastern despotism encouraged. In response, coverage throughout the conflict would present their overthrow as having avenged a perceived injustice, removed the risk of further violence, and replaced weak governance with the apparent stability of Company rule. Despite similarities, the public response to those events was not a static process or one influenced by the episode in question alone. Exposure afforded to the war in India throughout 1756-64 helped to facilitate an evolving and more critical debate concerning

[153] Grose, *Voyage to the East-Indies*, p. 69.

the nature and appropriateness of British involvement in the region. Press exposure afforded to reports of violence reveals a complex forum of public discourse, with the expression of arguments and analysis more typically associated with later decades of the eighteenth century. Conversely, the influence of a more traditional mercantile outlook, and established imagery relating to the idea of oriental despotism, meant commentary produced during the Seven Years' War also represented the evolution of an earlier engagement with India. In effect, public reactions during this period were unique, a product of, and precursor to, a distinct socio-political climate and different way of evaluating British involvement in India. The fluid response of commentators to incidents like the Black Hole affair or Patna, reflected the transitory nature of the conflict they were set against, one that bridged a predominately blue-water view of the overseas world, and the sense of imperial pre-eminence that shaped British attitudes from 1765 onwards.

CONCLUSION

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH A GLOBAL CONFLICT

The cessation of hostilities in North America following the suppression of Pontiac's rebellion, and the capitulation of Mughal forces in Bengal after their defeat at Buxar, brought the wider Seven Years' War era to a close. From Monongahela in 1755 to Patna in 1763, horrific accounts of violence committed overseas captivated the attention of British news commentators and audiences. Coverage afforded to these episodes highlighted the apparent risks associated with a growing presence on the world stage. Repeatedly presented as transgressions of established military convention or natural law, news of violence committed by Amerindian or Mughal forces appeared to confirm many of the intellectual theories and popular literary tropes already associated with those regions by the mid-eighteenth century.

In North America, the deliberate targeting of British settlers and the use of brutal irregular tactics during encounters with British troops was proof to many that Amerindians were savage barbarians, driven by base desires and a primitive bloodlust. Already a long-held view in colonial public discourse, commentary printed by the British news press from 1754-64 used reports of seemingly indiscriminate violence to emphasise the danger Indians posed, but also to justify military action that would punish and remove the perceived threat. A similar process occurred with exposure afforded to the conflict fought in India throughout the same period. Instead of drawing on concepts of primitivism, press coverage of violent acts apparently instigated or condoned by despotic local rulers, built on earlier themes associated with popular ideas of eastern despotism. News of episodes such as the Black Hole affair or alleged atrocities committed against East India Company agents reinforced this image of oppressive and duplicitous tyrants, whose actions and perceived lack of moral virtue demanded retribution but also justified their removal on the grounds Britain would provide more stable governance. Press engagement with both theatres during the Seven Years' War - North America and India - saw reports of violence used in much the same way; for drawing attention to perceived threats to British interests and to advocate a response that would achieve justice, remove the potential risk, and place Britain in a stronger position moving forward. Yet as demonstrated throughout this thesis, the formation of public discourse relating to these issues was by no means straightforward, particularly when it came to the issue of culpability. Indeed, discussions articulated via

news commentary concerning whom or what was the perceived cause of the violence in question, led to a variety of opinions and surprisingly critical analysis relating to British actions around the world.

As explored in chapter two, personal convictions, commercial interests, and political rivalry played a key role in determining the content and focus of news polemic. Those motivations often rested on disagreements between individual persons or groups within society, which translated into different ways of interpreting and presenting violence committed against Britons overseas. Following the defeat at Monongahela, commentators highlighted the violent tactics of Amerindian forces that seemingly went against European principles of military conduct. Yet in an attempt to undermine the Newcastle government, various accounts also chose to focus on the apparent failings of General Braddock, as well as the rigid and inappropriate military paradigm he appeared to represent. Similarly, press interest in violence committed against the frontier settlements helped to support all manner of competing agenda, with accusations levelled at uncooperative provincial assemblies, pacific Quakers, corrupt officials, sinful Britons, and perfidious French. The same was true of public engagement with India; news of violence allegedly carried out by Siraj-ud-Daulah, Mir Jafar, and Mir Cossim, was repeatedly used by opposing factions within the Company to attack the judgement and credibility of internal rivals. Of greater interest, however, is public discourse that used coverage of violent episodes as a means of scrutinising the appropriateness of British expansion in a broader sense.

From expedient interpretations of Amerindian warfare and perceptions of antagonistic colonial settlers, to reports of seemingly imprudent interventions in Mughal affairs, coverage of violence committed in North America and India throughout 1754-64 became a vehicle for an emerging scepticism concerning British actions overseas. Commentary relating to the Amerindian rebellions of 1760 and 1763, for instance, often took a conciliatory approach to those disputes, with attempts made to understand the antipathy caused by British colonists and their unchecked settlement of lands belonging to the indigenous population. In a similar fashion, alleged atrocities committed by Siraj-ud-Daulah or Mir Jafar were also blamed on the excessive demands of rapacious Company agents, or the result of a ruthless socio-political climate. Such examples of critical discourse provided the foundations for a more concerted metropolitan scrutiny of British imperial expansion in the decades after the Seven Years' War. Crucially, however, the period 1754-64 was not simply a thematic starting block for a later culture of engagement. As

demonstrated throughout this thesis, news commentary that took a sceptical disposition towards reports of overseas violence often did so from a position of commercial and strategic self-interest rather than explicit humanitarian concern. This was a period of growing popular interest in non-European affairs, but one where the hubris and anxieties associated with a later imperial outlook had yet to fully replace the priorities and attitudes of an earlier worldview. The result was highly fluid and often contradictory public engagement unique to, and a consequence of, this transition from mercantile to territorial power.

In addition to the distinctive public discourse generated throughout war, what this thesis has also demonstrated is the interconnected nature of that global conflict in terms of its presentation by the news press. Although larger publications and the periodicals often grouped issues for discussion according to local theatres, it is also true that whatever reports had recently arrived in Britain often determined what episode would feature in news commentary and the extent of exposure it received. The news press largely approached events on a case-by-case basis, irrespective of where those circumstances had taken place or the broader levels of awareness relating to those regions. North America generated the most source material and with greatest frequency so inevitably received the bulk of press attention, however, when reports from India did enter circulation commentators often engaged with the issues they raised in largely the same manner. As shown in chapter five, for instance, the wider and overlooked impact of the Black Hole affair on public discourse is an indication that events in India were not simply a sideshow but generated significant interest *during* the period, not simply after. The result was a news press that offered a reasonably holistic picture of the wider conflict Britain was involved in from 1754-64. News coverage relating to acts of violence, in particular, reinforced this sense of an interconnected and trans-national confrontation. Despite taking place in very different contexts, reports of alleged atrocities committed in North America and India drew upon the same themes, intellectual culture, literary tropes, and used by commentators in a similar way to elicit support for competing arguments and agenda. Explicit comparisons between specific incidents from separate theatres helped to establish a sense of equivalence in terms of the circumstances they described, and even the inclusion of unrelated reports in a single publication often created an unavoidable sense of juxtaposition. Indeed, as the first edition of the *Annual Register* said of the conflict in a

wider sense, 'the war in which all parties and interests seem now to be so perfectly blended, arose from causes which originally had not the least connection'.[1] Individual and often unconnected acts of violence committed against Britons overseas were subjects of public concern, interest, and entertainment in their own right. Yet the broader discussions and debates those incidents helped to articulate also meant they formed part of a wider narrative and collective sense of engagement with British actions on the global stage at large.

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[1] *Annual Register of the Year 1758* (London, 1759), p. 2.

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